

The Canterbury Poets

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP

ROBERT BROWNING.

**FOR FULL LIST OF THE VOLUMES IN THIS SERIES-
SEE CATALOGUE AT END OF BOOK.**

PIPPA PASSES, AND OTHER
POETIC DRAMAS, BY
ROBERT BROWNING. WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY
FRANK RINDER.

(1833—1842.)

LONDON
WALTER SCOTT, LIMITED
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY FRANK RINDER.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

"WRITE with thy blood and thou wilt learn that blood, is spirit," says a recent German philosopher; and in a sense it may be said that Robert Browning dipped his pen in those strong tides of life which from childhood sustained his vigorous and apparently inevitable vitality. To use his own significant words, he was "made up of an intensest life," and to this passionate preoccupation his poems, in greater or lesser degree, give expression. Dowered by nature with a fine physique, he was temperamentally an optimist; yet by spiritual intuition he knew and felt the sorrows of those whose natures differed widely from his own, and whose lines of life lay amid less fortunate circumstances. His very robustness of thought, his very sanity of genius, have been adduced to deny him the name of poet. But if to be a torchbearer in an age when the gloom of doubt has fallen upon many; if, while alert to the complex present and troubled by the unknown future, to sing of hope and joy; if to interpret the secrets of the soul and at its fount to find a well-spring capable of overcoming all obstacles; if to express these things in rhythmic words aglow with the light of his imagination, of his heart; if this is to be a poet, then

Browning was indeed a poet, and a poet of high and rare genius.

In contradistinction to Shakespeare, for example, who confers upon his characters a life entirely apart from his own, who in the main permits events to interpret the secret emotion of his creations, Browning ever makes us feel the personality behind his words, always are we aware of the weaver whose shuttle is hope even when darkness is around him. It has been said many times, but may be repeated here, that in his first published poem, "Pauline," Browning stands revealed; indeed, were it not so, students of the man and of the poet would be robbed of much valuable and trustworthy data. In few first works are the longings and aspirations of the writer, the insight and power of the artist, more clearly visible. This "Fragment of a Confession"—fragmentary only that it passes from experience to experience so rapidly as, at times, to tax the reader's understanding—bears the date October 22, 1832, and therefore was published before the poet had completed his twenty-first year. It may be well briefly to summarise the circumstances in which "Pauline" was written, and the means by which it found its way into print.

In boyhood, as we gather from a later poem, Browning's love of music, of painting, of sculpture, and of poetry were of almost equal intensity. As one of the poet's biographers has told us, his mother, while playing to herself in the soft afternoon light, noticed the figure of her son watching her and listening intently. The melody must have awakened some echo from the deeps.

of his childish heart, for a moment thereafter he flung himself into her arms with a cry, and presently entreated her to "Play, play!" The passion for music remained with him always; nay, composers have been heard to say that "Abt Vogler" could have been written only by a musician.

One engraving among his father's collection seems to have had a special fascination for him; that, namely, of *Andromeda and Perseus*, after Caravaggio's picture. At first, it may be that its narrative interest eclipsed its pictorial spell, but the power of the presentment appears to have gained a strange influence over him, for the engraving was always beside him as he wrote his earlier poems, and his feeling for it is thus beautifully expressed in the lines from "Pauline" beginning—

"Andromeda!
And she is with me—years roll, I shall change."

From earliest boyhood Browning was an omnivorous reader, and in his father's large library he found an ample supply of books. Mrs. Sutherland Orr tells that in a seventeenth century edition of Quarles' *Emblemes*, a volume which delighted him above all others because therein he found food for the imagination and for the brain, appear specimens of his unformed handwriting. A love for history and for undiluted fact, handed down from his father, and later developed in works such as "The Ring and the Book," was also a characteristic. From Mrs. Sutherland Orr, too, we learn that *Robinson Crusoe*, Milton's works, both in first editions, a treatise

on astrology, the original pamphlet, *Killing no Murder*, an early copy of Mandeville's *Bess*, ancient bibles, and more modern publications such as the writings of Voltaire, *Walpole's Letters* and the *Letters of Junius* were formative influences in the development of young Browning. At the age of twelve, under the spell of Byron, he had completed a volume of short poems. "Incondita," despite the interest taken in it by his parents, never appeared; indeed, although not destroyed by the poet until 1871, few save Miss Flower and the Rev. W. J. Fox, the first critic to draw attention to Browning's genius, seem to have had sight of these youthful efforts.

As, however, heedful readers of "Pauline" are aware, influences other than those derived from books were at work at this time. In the woods beyond Dulwich, whither he walked from his Camberwell home, the youth came into intimate contact with nature. Alert to observe, swift to respond to the ever-changing moods of the world around him, it was here he first knew that nature-rapture which, albeit he is, in his own words, primarily the poet of the soul, runs as a thread of sunlit green through all his work; here, in the silence of summer evenings, in the calm of dawn, or when at midnight even nature seemed to pause in her breathing, he held communion with wind and tree and bird—

"I can live all the life of plants, and gaze
Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,
Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,
Or open in the night of sounds, to look
For the dim stars; I can mount with the bird,

Or like a fish breathe in the morning air

**In the misty sun-warm water—or with flowers
And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun."**

In those Dulwich woods too he entered on his heritage of dream; a dream concerned not only with a world of his own making, but with that complex London life, for him reflected as a yellow glow on the evening sky, fraught with so strange a significance. Already he was conscious of the undefinable attraction, the sense of mysterious unrest which broods over London. Thus early the call to interpret was making itself audible.

A marked, if not actually the dominant influence under which he wrote "Pauline" was that of Shelley. By chance one day, before he had even heard of the poet, he espied a little book marked "Mr. Shelley's Atheistical Poem," and shortly afterwards, in response to an earnest request, his mother succeeded in buying, at Olliers' in Vere Street, most of Shelley's writings in their first edition. The May night in which he read "Epipsychidion" and the "Prometheus Unbound" was a memorable one; never did he forget the surprised joy with which he conned the haunting lines. Keats, too, that evening held him spell-bound, for Mrs. Browning had been induced to buy a volume of his poems at the same time. If only for the impassioned and beautiful tribute to Shelley contained therein, "Pauline" must be accounted highly.

**"Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever;
Thou art gone from us—years go by—and spring
Gladdens, and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not—other bards arise,
But none like thee—they stand—thy majesties,**

Like mighty works which tell some Spirit there
 Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
 Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
 And left us, never to return : and all
 Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain."

And again—

"Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,
 And love ; and as one just escaped from death
 Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
 He lives indeed—so, I would lean on thee."

Although Mr. and Mrs. Browning were impressed with the poem when it was read to them, they did not care to supply the money necessary for its publication, and it was the writer's aunt who finally put the requisite sum in his hands. "Pauline" was published anonymously, and in order still further to veil the secret of its authorship, the original edition is dated from Richmond, a place where Browning never lived. As far as is known, three reviews only appeared : an appreciative notice in the *Monthly Repository* by the Rev. W. J. Fox, to whom the youthful poet had sent a copy of the little volume, and who from that time became one of his truest friends and admirers ; Allan Cunningham's sympathetic notice in the *Athenæum*, and some derisive words describing the poem as "a picce of pure bewilderment" in Tait's *Edinburgh Magazine*, an uncritical paper which forestalled and prevented the appearance of a favourable review which John Stuart Mill is said to have prepared. The poet's own estimate of "Pauline" is over-severe. At Browning's desire it was not included in the first edition of his collected works, issued in 1849, from

which the text of the present volume is taken; in the edition of 1868, however, it found a place with the following note appended :—

"The thing was my earliest attempt at 'poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine,' which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant, and scale less impracticable, than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch—a sketch that, on reviewal, appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced: good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time."

Despite this piece of self-criticism, passages of rare beauty, such, for example, as those beginning—

"Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
Between the sullen river and the woods,"

make it a worthy achievement; moreover, in it we see, half-folded, the wings whereon Browning was to mount to the heights of his genius. Ten years ago a reprint of the original edition of "Pauline," now a very valuable volume, similar in shape, type, printing, etc., to the booklet published in 1832, was issued by the Browning Society.

A comparison of the text of the 1832 and the 1886 editions shows that the poet saw reason to alter materially the punctuation, hardly a line remaining in its original form; beyond this, however, a few verbal emendations only were made, and a line or two cancelled here and there.

In passing to Robert Browning's second work, "Para-

celsus," published in 1835, and included in chronological order in the present volume, it is well to remember the poet's own words: "I have endeavoured to write a poem, not a drama," he says. As a poem thrown into dramatic form, therefore, it must be judged. By some it is accounted the work by which Browning will live; his detractors regard it as without form, unintelligible; while others again see in it the gradual unfolding of powers evidence of whose existence was given in "Pauline." Its range and scope are co-extensive with the limits of a soul's experience, a soul striving ever for the unattainable or unattained.

On the title-page appears the name of the Count de Ripert-Monclar, and he it was who first suggested to Browning the idea of writing a poem having for subject the life of the celebrated German mystic and man of science. Subsequently, however, as the love element could not be introduced, the Count altered his opinion. Much study was necessary before a work such as "Paracelsus" could be commenced, but we may be sure that the young writer, then in his twenty-fourth year, addressed himself to the task with avidity. In an essay read before the Browning Society, Dr. Berdoe gave an interesting sketch of the Paracelsus, misunderstood and misrepresented by his chroniclers, and Paracelsus as Browning shows him in his poem. Here, perhaps, Browning's power to weigh conflicting evidence, added to his poetic vision—which after all may be only one side of his "intensest life"—enabled him to paint a portrait of the man truer than any which had appeared. The mysticism

pervading "Paracelsus," to which so many critics have taken exception, is in accord with the character treated.

Early in life, Paracelsus, the son of a physician, began to study the occult sciences. For the most part, he learned from the oral teachings of his masters. Books he abhorred; he loved to interrogate nature without the intervention of another personality. Moreover, as time passed, he became intolerant of authority, and preferred to pursue his studies alone, or to listen to an old woman voicing the traditional wisdom of her race, rather than sit at the feet of book-learned men at the Universities. Beneath all surged his faith in the infinite possibilities of the human soul; its kinship with the essence of things, apprehension of which, he held, could be gained by the path of knowledge only—"knowing is opening the way to let the imprisoned splendour escape," as Browning ruggedly expresses it. To Paracelsus, "the father of modern chemistry," as he has been called, we owe the discovery of opium, zinc, bismuth, hydrogen gas, and the medical uses of many minerals. To this man, whatever his shortcomings, his age owed a great debt. Browning's poem did much to re-awaken interest in his career, to unwind and weave anew the tangled threads of his life. It is hardly necessary to add that apart from the presentment of Paracelsus' dauntless pursuit of knowledge, Browning's second published poem has a deep significance. In it we see the struggle towards light of a soul bent on enfranchisement.

With regard to individual passages, from few of the poet's longer works could a greater number of strong and

beautiful quotations be made. One excerpt may be given here, the second of the "Paracelsus" lyrics, so rich, so musical, so characteristic :—

"Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair : (such balsam falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From summits where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.)

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud,
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;
And shred dim perfume, like a cloud
From chamber long to quiet vowed,
With mother and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering the lute and books among
Of queen, long dead, who lived there young."

This time the *Athenæum* did not regard Browning's work as a worthy achievement, or even see promise therein. In the *Examiner*, however, "Paracelsus" was hailed as a drama of extraordinary power, and the *New Monthly Magazine*, in a long article from the same pen, affirmed that "Mr. Browning is a man of genius, he has in himself all the elements of a great poet, philosophical as well as dramatic." John Forster, the writer of these important criticisms, became known to Browning between the publication of the first and second of them, and the friendship then formed continued for long. In the *Monthly Repository* Mr. Fox again expressed his admiration for the young poet's work, this time laying as much stress on the achievement as on the promise.

"Paracelsus," first published in 1835, finds a place in each of the collected editions of Browning's works, those namely of 1849, 1863, 1868, 1888, and 1896. In the winter which followed the appearance of "Paracelsus," Browning met by invitation, at Mr. Fox's house, the man who was the immediate cause of his writing "Strafford." The great actor, Macready, then at the zenith of his fame, was attracted by the poet's personality, and as a result of this first meeting, Browning paid several visits to his house at Elstree. Macready recognised in "Paracelsus" the work of a writer capable to produce a moving drama. In the actor's diary, under date February 16, 1836, this mention is made of Browning: "He said that I had bit him by my performance of 'Othello,' and I said I hoped I should make the blood come. It would indeed be some recompense for the miseries, the humiliations, the heart-sickening disgusts which I have endured in my profession, if, by its exercise, I had awakened a spirit of poetry whose influence would elevate, ennoble, and adorn our degraded drama." Browning first suggested Narses as a subject to Macready; it was, however, abandoned in favour of Strafford.

In this connection Dr. F. J. Furnivall's letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in April 1890 is of interest. Therein he affirms that Robert Browning and not John Forster wrote by far the greater part of the *Life of Strafford* contained in the second volume of the "Lives of English Statesmen," Lardner's "Cabinet Cyclopædia." Forster, it appears, was taken ill immediately after he had begun

the work, and with the material in his possession. Browning completed the literary task for his disabled friend. Not until Forster's death, however, did Browning make mention of his timely aid, and to this day, so far as the public is concerned, Forster is accredited with the authorship. The fact explains, in part at any rate, the poet's choice of subject for the drama.

Professor Gardiner, the greatest living authority on the history of that period, remarks that it would be futile to consider "Strafford" from the standpoint of historical accuracy, since it proceeds irrespective of historical truth; nevertheless, he is of opinion that Browning has "seized the real Strafford," and also, despite the exaggeration of faults, the real Charles I. The play, produced on the night of May 1st, 1837, the year of the Queen's accession, and a few hours after Carlyle had delivered his first lecture in London, had a mixed reception, mainly in consequence of the lamentably poor way in which most of the parts were filled. With the exception of Macready and Helen Faucit, the actors lacked understanding and power. After the sixth representation, when the impersonator of Pym failed to appear, "Strafford" was withdrawn. The original cast will be found prefixed to the play in the present volume. As those who witnessed its performance under the auspices of the Browning Society in 1886 can testify, "Strafford" is a drama for the stage, not for the study. The lines, because of their stern economy, require the magic of a human personality to educe their significance; the strength of the situations can be grasped only on the

stage. In the opinion of some critics, "Strafford" is yet destined to wield a great influence on English dramatic literature. The play was not included in the first issue of the poet's collected works, but it appears in the four later editions, and in its revised form was issued with an introduction by Professor Gardiner and notes by Miss Hickey in 1884.

"Sordello," which Browning had laid aside in order to write the drama for Macready, comes next in any chronological record of his work. It has, and with justice, been described as the colossal derelict on the ocean of modern literature. Since it is to appear in another volume of the Canterbury Poets, it is unnecessary to do more than mention the fact of its publication in 1840. A year thereafter the first of the memorable series of dramas and poems, *Bells and Pomegranates*, was printed—a title employed to indicate the nature of the compositions, "an alternation, or mixture, of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought," to use the poet's own explanatory words at the end of the initial series. But here again, as in the case of "Pauline," does not Browning under-estimate the worth of his own work? Is it indeed that sound alternates with sense, or that in the passages of supreme beauty scattered throughout "Pippa Passes" a meaning is conveyed too subtle to cling to aught save such simple, almost childlike outpourings of song? Without doubt, Browning's intellectual message to his time was a great one; but many of us feel that the finest expression of his genius is to be found in those beautiful lyrics, so simple as not to reveal

their intellectuality, yet in whose depths lie great spiritual truths.

"Pippa Passes" was first sold for sixpence. In conversation with Edward Moxon one day, Browning learned that the publisher was bringing out an edition of the Elizabethan dramatists in cheap form, and finally it was arranged that some of his poems should be printed as pamphlets, thus bringing them within the reach of many would-be purchasers. Browning hoped, as he himself says in the preface to "Pippa Passes," to appeal to the good-natured pit audience who had welcomed warmly his "Strafford" at Covent Garden Theatre. The original price, in consequence of the disappointing sale, was soon doubled, and afterwards raised to half-a-crown. For this sum each of the first eight numbers of *Bells and Pomegranates*, which appeared between 1841 and 1846, were sold.

Walking alone one day in the woods beyond Dulwich, where much of "Paracelsus" was composed, many scenes of "Strafford" planned and in imagination enacted, the root-idea of "Pippa Passes" came to him. "The image flashed upon him," says Mrs. Sutherland Orr, "of some one walking thus alone through life; one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it; and the image shaped itself into the little silk-winder of Asolo, Felippa or Pippa."

Asolo, the beautiful hill-town of Italy, will ever be associated with Browning and with his winsome creation, Pippa, the echo of whose joyous song—

"The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!"

none can forget.

With one or two exceptions, reviewers paid scant attention to "Pippa Passes"; indeed, from this time onward for twenty years, save for the enthusiastic support of a small circle of appreciative readers, Browning's genius was not generally recognised. "Pippa Passes" was reprinted in each of the subsequent editions of the poet's works.

The historical tragedy, "King Victor and King Charles," with which the present volume concludes, was published by Mr. Moxon in pamphlet form a year later. In it Browning has adhered closely to historical truth, save in hastening by a year the death of King Victor. The poet's own preface is interesting as indicating the material out of which he shaped the tragedy. Like the first part of the "Bells and Pomegranates" series, "King Victor and King Charles" finds a place in the five collected editions.

Within the next eight years Browning was to produce, besides poems and lyrics which have become familiar to thousands, the following notable dramas and argumentative and dramatic poems:—"The Return of the Druses," "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon," "Colombe's Birthday," "The Flight of the Duchess," "Luria," "A Soul's Tragedy,"

and "Christmas Eve and Easter Day." These are included in a companion volume of this.

For close on sixty years Robert Browning practised his art ; and almost each year saw the creation of a poem, a lyric, or some lines that testify to his profound interpretation of life, to his lofty thought, to his psychic insight, and, above all, to the rare quality of his poetic genius.

For Browning everything was beautiful ; and the knowledge that beauty is everywhere, that was love. In the superbly fine epilogue to "Asolando," written shortly before his death in 1889, these lines occur—

"One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

No words could better describe the brave man, the great poet to whom his age owes much of sunshine, much of hope.

FRANK RINDER.

Pauline :

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,
Et ne le saurois jamais être.—MAROT.

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate sua quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos, nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temerariâ suâ ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt: Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse: . . . aded conscientiæ suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æquâ mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repperitis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuit. . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—II. Cor. Agrippa, *De Occult. Phil.*

London, January, 1833.

V. A. XX.

Pauline :

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes,
And loosened hair, and breathing lips, and arms
Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear,
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking place,
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return
To one so watched, so loved, and so secured.
But what can guard thee but thy naked love ?
Ah, dearest ! whoso sucks a poisoned wound
Envenoms his own veins,—thou art so good,
So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow less light
For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept
From out thy soul, as from a sacred star.
Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain
To hope to sing ; some woe would light on me ;
Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip
Was bathed in her enchantments—whose brow burned
Beneath the crown, to which her secrets knelt ;
Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,
And then departed, smiling like a fiend
Who has deceived God. If such one should seek
Again her altars, and stand robed and crowned
Amid the faithful : sad confession first,
Remorse and pardon, and old-claims renewed,
Ere I can be—as I shall be no more.

I had been spared this shame, if I had sate
By thee for ever, from the first, in place
Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,
Or with them, as an earnest of their truth.
No thought nor hope, having been shut from thee,
No vague wish unexplained—no wandering aim
Sent back to bind on Fancy's wings, and seek
Some strange fair world, where it might be a law;
But doubting nothing, had been led by thee,
Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length awaked,
Who has slept thro' a peril. Ah ! vain, vain !

Thou lovest me—the past is in its grave,
Tho' its ghost haunts us—still this much is ours,
To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing
Wait for us in the darkness. Thou lovest me,
And thou art to receive not love, but faith,
For which thou wilt be mine, and smile, and take
All shapes, and shames, and veil without a fear
That form which music follows like a slave;
And I look to thee, and I trust in thee,
As in a Northern night one looks alway
Unto the East for morn, and spring and joy.
Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,
And resting on some few old feelings, won
Back by thy beauty, would'st that I essay
The task, which was to me what now thou art :
And why should I conceal one weakness more ?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when Winter
Crept aged from the earth, and Spring's first breath
Blew soft from the moist hills—the black-thorn boughs,
So dark in the bare wood; when glistening
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,
Like the bright side of a sorrow—and the banks
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes—

I walked with thee, who knew not a deep shame
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words, which sought
To hide it—till they wandered and were mute ;
As we stood listening on a sunny mound
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing
Betrayed by sleep—until the feeling rushed
That I was low indeed, yet not so low
As to endure the calmness of thine eyes ;
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast
I leaned on altered not its quiet beating ;
And long ere words, like a hurt bird's complaint,
Bade me look up and be what I had been,
I felt despair could never live by thee.
Thou wilt remember :—thou art not more dear
Than song was once to me ; and I ne'er sung
But as one entering bright halls, where all
Will rise and shout for him. Sure I must own
That I am fallen—having chosen gifts
Distinct from theirs—that I am sad—and fain
Would give up all to be but where I was ;
Not high as I had been, if faithful found—
But low and weak, yet full of hope, and sure
Of goodness as of life—that I would lose
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit
Once more with them, trusting in truth and love,
And with an aim—not being what I am.

Oh, Pauline ! I am ruined ! who believed
That tho' my soul had floated from its sphere
Of wide dominion into the dim orb
Of self—that it was strong and free as ever :—
It has conformed itself to that dim orb,
Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now
Must stay where it alone can be adored.
I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which

I seemed the fate from which I fled; I felt
A strange delight in causing my decay;
I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever
Within some ocean-cave; and ages rolled,
Till thro' the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came
A white swan to remain with me; and ages
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy
In gazing on the peace of its pure wings.
And then I said, "It is most fair to me,
"Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change
"From the thick darkness—sure its eyes are dim—
"Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed
"With sleeping ages here; it cannot leave me,
"For it would seem, in light, beside its kind,
"Withered—tho' here to me most beautiful."
And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes,
As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god—I watched his radiant form
Growing less radiant—and it gladdened me;
Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine
Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,
He turned to look at me, ere I could lose
The grin with which I viewed his perishing.
And he shrieked and departed, and sat long
By his deserted throne—but sunk at last,
Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled
Around him, "I am still a god—to thee."
Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,
For all the wandering and all the weakness
Will be a saddest comment on the song.
And if, that done, I can be young again,
I will give up all gained as willingly
As one gives up a charm which shuts him out
From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.
As life wanes, all its cares, and strife, and toil,
Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees

Which grew by our youth's home—the waving mass
Of climbing plants, heavy with bloom and dew—
The morning swallows with their songs like words,—
All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts.
So aught connected with my early life——
My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
How I look on them—most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years !

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,
Had not the glow I felt at HIS award,
Assured me all was not extinct within.
HIM whom all honor—whose renown springs up
Like sunlight which will visit all the world ;
So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,
Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls
From his foul nets, which some lit torch invades,
Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.—
Thou didst smile, poet,—but, can *we* forgive ?

Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever ;
Thou art gone from us—years go by—and spring
Gladdens, and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not—other bards arise,
But none like thee—they stand—thy majesties,
Like mighty works which tell some Spirit there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
And left us, never to return : and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.
The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
But thou art still for me, as thou hast been
When I have stood with thee, as on a throne
With all thy dim creations gathered round
Like mountains,—and I felt of mould like them,
And creatures of my own were mixed with them,

Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.
But thou art still for me, who have adored,
Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name,
Which I believed a spell to me alone,
Scarce deeming thou wert as a star to men—
As one should worship long a sacred spring
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,
And one small tree embowers droopingly,
Joying to see some wandering insect won,
To live in its few rushes—or some locust
To pasture on its boughs—or some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air,
And then should find it but the fountain-head,
Long lost, of some great river—washing towns
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live
But by its banks, untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot—waiting a wondrous change
—Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
Being the pulse of some great country—so
Wert thou to me—and art thou to the world.
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,
That I am not what I have been to thee :
Like a girl one has loved long silently,
In her first loveliness, in some retreat,
When first emerged, all gaze and glow to view
Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips which bleed
Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is sweet
To see her thus adored—but there have been
Moments, when all the world was in his praise,
Sweeter than all the pride of after hours.
Yet, Sun-treader, all hail !—from my heart's heart
I bid thee hail !—e'en in my wildest dreams,

I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all
The wreathes of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
To have seen thee, for a moment, as thou art.

And if thou livest—if thou lovest, spirit I
Remember me, who set this final seal
To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou
Could never die. Remember me, who flung
All honor from my soul—yet paused and said,
“There is one spark of love remaining yet,
“For I have nought in common with him—shapes
“Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms
“Seek me, which ne’er could fasten on his mind;
“And tho’ I feel how low I am to him,
“Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
“Of all the harmonies he called up,
“So one gleam still remains, altho’ the last.”
Remember me—who praise thee e’en with tears,
For never more shall I walk calm with thee;
Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
A melody, some wond’rous singer sings,
Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,
They dream not to essay; yet it no less,
But more is honored. I was thine in shame,
And now when all thy proud renown is out,
I am a watcher, whose eyes have grown dim
With looking for some star—which breaks on him,
Altered, and worn, and weak, and full of tears.

Autumn has come—like Spring returned to us,
Won from her girlishness—like one returned
A friend that was a lover—nor forgets
The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts
Of fading years; whose soft mouth quivers yet
With the old smile—but yet so changed and still!

And here am I the scoffer, who have probed
Life's vanity, won by a word again
Into my old life—for one little word
Of this sweet friend, who lives in loving me,
Lives strangely on my thoughts, and looks, and words,
As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing
Its silent course of quietness and joy.
O dearest, if, indeed, I tell the past,
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream;
Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon
Sinks to itself, and whispers, we shall be
But closer linked—two creatures whom the earth
Bears singly—with strange feelings, unrevealed
But to each other; or two lonely things
Created by some Power, whose reign is done,
Having no part in God, or his bright world,
I am to sing; whilst ebbing day dies soft,
As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book,
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one,
As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.
I must not think—lest this new impulse die
In which I trust. I have no confidence,
So I will sing on—fast as fancies come
Rudely—the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare—whose first elements
I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth
In infancy, nor as they now exist,
That I am grown above them, and can rule them,
But in that middle stage, when they were full,
Yet ere I had disposed them to my will;
And then I shall show how these elements
Produced my present state, and what it is.
I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self—distinct from all its qualities,

From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ;
And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,
But linked in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create, and rule, and call
Upon all things to minister to it ;
And to a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—
This is myself; and I should thus have been,
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save
From utter death a soul with such desires
Confined to clay—which is the only one
Which marks me—an imagination which
Has been an angel to me—coming not
In fitful visions, but beside me ever,
And never failing me; so tho' my mind
Forgets not—not a shred of life forgets—
Yet I can take a secret pride in calling
The dark past up—to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,
But I have always had one lode-star; now,
As I look back, I see that I have wasted,
Or progressed as I looked toward that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God,
A feeling I have analysed but late,
But it existed, and was reconciled
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.
I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear—and thence I date my trust in signs
And omens—for I saw God every where;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt

Even his being—having always felt
His presence—never acting from myself,
Still trusting in a hand that leads me through
All danger; and this feeling still has fought
Against my weakest reason and resolves.

And I can love nothing—and this dull truth
Has come the last—but sense supplies a love
Encircling me and mingling with my life.

These make myself—I have sought in vain
To trace how they were formed by circumstance,
For I still find them—turning my wild youth
Where they alone displayed themselves, converting
All objects to their use—now see their course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life,
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books,
All halo-girt with fancies of my own,
And I myself went with the tale—a god,
Wandering after beauty—or a giant,
Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter,
Talking with gods—or a high-crested chief,
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos;—
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives.
I had not seen a work of lofty art,
Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's face,
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea:
The deep groves, and white temples, and wet caves—
And nothing ever will surprise me now—
Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

An' strange it is, that I who could so dream,

Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath—
Aught low, or painful, but I never doubted;
So as I grew, I rudely shaped my life
To my immediate wants, yet strong beneath
Was a vague sense of powers folded up—
A sense that tho' those shadowy times were past,
Their spirit dwelt in me, and I should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down
My soul, till it was changed. I lost myself,
And were it not that I so loathe that time,
I could recall how first I learned to turn
My mind against itself; and the effects,
In deeds for which remorse were vain, as for
The wanderings of delirious dream; yet thence
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which so long
Have spotted me—at length I was restored,
Yet long the influence remained; and nought
But the still life I led, apart from all,
Which left my soul to seek its old delights,
Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.
As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit:
And song rose—no new impulse—but the one
With which all others best could be combined.
My life has not been that of those whose heaven
Was lampless, save where poesy shone out;
But as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops,
And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun;
For music, (which is earnest of a heaven,
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,
Not else to be revealed,) is as a voice,
A low voice calling Fancy, as a friend,
To the green woods in the gay summer time.
And she fills all the way with dancing shapes,
Which have made painters pale; and they go on

While stars look at them, and winds call to them,
As they leave life's path for the twilight world,
Where the dead gather. This was not at first,
For I scarce knew what I would do. I had
No wish to paint, no yearning—but I sang.

And first I sang, as I in dream have seen,
Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,
Yet singing to herself until it came.
I turned to those old times and scenes, where all
That's beautiful had birth for me, and made
Rude verses on them all; and then I paused—
I had done nothing, so I sought to know
What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine
As I gazed on the works of mighty bards,
In the first joy at finding my own thoughts
Recorded, and my powers exemplified,
And feeling their aspirings were my own.
And then I first explored passion and mind;
And I began afresh; I rather sought
To rival what I wondered at, than form
Creations of my own; so much was light
Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

I paused again—a change was coming on,
I was no more a boy—the past was breaking
Before the coming, and like fever worked.
I first thought on myself—and here my powers
Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed
On all things: schemes and systems went and came,
And I was proud (being vainest of the weak),
In wandering o'er them, to seek out some one
To be my own; as one should wander o'er
The white way for a star.

On one, whom praise of mine would not offend,

Who was as calm as beauty—being such
 Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,
 Believing in them, and devoting all
 His soul's strength to their winning back to peace ;
 Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake,
 Clothed in all passion's melodies, which first
 Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet task,
 To gather every breathing of his songs.
 And woven with them there were words, which
 seemed

A key to a new world ; the muttering
 Of angels, of some thing unguessed by man.
 How my heart beat, as I went on, and found
 Much there ! I felt my own mind had conceived,
 But there living and burning ; soon the whole
 Of his conceptions dawned on me ; their praise
 Is in the tongues of men ; men's brows are high
 When his name means a triumph and a pride ;
 So my weak hands may well forbear to dim
 What then seemed my bright fate : I threw myself
 To meet it. I was vowed to liberty,
 Men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven.
 And I—ah ! what a life was mine to be,
 My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,
 I shall go mad, if I recall that time.

O let me look back, e'er I leave for ever
 The time, which was an hour, that one waits
 For a fair girl, that comes a withered hag.
 And I was lonely,—far from woods and fields,
 And amid dullest sights, who should be loose
 As a stag—yet I was full of joy—who lived
 With Plato—and who had the key to life.
 And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
 And many a thought did I build up on thought,
 As the wild bee hangs cell to cell—in vain ;

For I must still go on : my mind rests not.
'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
Which was all new to me ; my theories
Were firm, so I left them, to look upon
Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys ;
And, as I pondered on them all, I sought
How best life's end might be attained—an end
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly, without heart-wreck, I awoke
As from a dream—I said, 'twas beautiful,
Yet but a dream ; and so adieu to it.
As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees,
Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,
And laughing fairy creatures peeping over,
And on the morrow, when he comes to live
For ever by those springs, and trees, fruit-flushed
And fairy bowers—all his search is vain.
Well I remember . . .
First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,
And faith in them—then freedom in itself,
And virtue in itself—and then my motives' ends,
And powers and loves ; and human love went last.
I felt this no decay, because new powers
Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,
And happiness ; for I had oft been sad,
Mistrusting my resolves : but now I cast
Hope joyously away—I laughed and said,
" No more of this "—I must not think ; at length
I look'd again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater—as some temple seemed
My soul, where nought is changed, and incense rolls
Around the altar—only God is gone,
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat !

So I passed through the temple ; and to me
 Knelt troops of shadows ; and they cried, " Hail, king !
 " We serve thee now, and thou shalt serve no more !
 " Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee !"

And I said, " Are ye strong—let fancy bear me
 " Far from the past."—And I was borne away
 As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
 O'er deserts, towers, and forests, I being calm ;
 And I said, " I have nugged up energies,
 " They will prey on me." And a hand knelt low,
 And cried, " Lord, we are here, and we will make
 " A way for thee—in thine appointed life
 " O look on us !" And I said, " Ye will worship
 " Me ; but my heart must worship too." They
 shouted,
 " Thyself—thou art our king !" So I stood there
 Smiling * * * * *

And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
 With which I looked out how to end my days ;
 I felt once more myself—my powers were mine ;
 I found that youth or health so lifted me,
 That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief
 Came nigh me—I must ever be light-hearted ;
 And that this feeling was the only veil
 Betwixt me and despair : so if age came,
 I should be as a wreck linked to a soul
 Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and aware
 Of my decay. So a long summer morn
 Found me ; and e'er noon came, I had resolved
 No age should come on me, ere youth's hopes went,
 For I would wear myself out—like that morn
 Which wasted not a sunbeam—every joy
 I would make mine, and die ; and thus I sought
 To chain my spirit down, which I had fed

With thoughts of fame. I said, the troubled life
Of genius seen so bright when working forth
Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain --
Most sad, when men have parted with all joy
For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,
As an obedient spirit, when delight
Came not with her alone, but allers soon,
Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to depart,
Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.

But I shall never lose her ; she will live
Brighter for such seclusion—I but catch
A huc, a glance of what I sing ; so pain
Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell
The radiant sights which dazzle me ; but now
They shall be all my own, and let them fade
Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast.
And when all's done, the few dim gleams transferred,---
(For a new thought sprung up—that it were well
To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave such lays
As would encircle me with praise and love ;
So I should not die utterly—I should bring
One branch from the gold forest, like the knight
Of old tales, witnessing I had been there,)—
And when all's done, how vain seems e'en success,
And all the influence poets have o'er men !
'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as myself,
Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words
He utters in his solitude shall move
Men like a swift wind—that tho' he be forgotten,
Fair eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams
Of love come true in happier frames than his.
Ay, the still night brought thoughts like these, but
morn
Came, and the mockery again laughed out

At hollow praises, and smiles, almost sneers ;
And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me
To dwell with him and his unhonoured name—
And I well knew my spirit, that would be
First in the struggle, and again would make
All bow to it ; and I would sink again.

And then know that this curse will come on us,
To see our idols perish—we may wither,
Nor marvel—we are clay ; but our low fate
Should not extend them, whom trustingly
We sent before into Time's yawning gulf,
To face what e'er may lurk in darkness there—
To see the painters' glory pass, and feel
Sweet music move us not as once, or worst,
To see decaying wits ere the frail body
Decays. Nought makes me trust in love so really,
As the delight of the contented lowness
With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for ever
In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them ;
I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's best blood,
Withering unseen, that they might flourish still.

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not forget
How this mood swayed me, when thou first wert mine,
When I had set myself to live this life,
Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest
I was most happy, sweet, for old delights
Had come like birds again ; music, my life,
I nourished more than ever, and old lore
Loved for itself, and all it shows—the king
Treading the purple calmly to his death,
—While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,
The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
Pile the dim outline of the coming doom,
—And him sitting alone in blood, while friends

Are hunting far in the sunshine; and the boy,
With his white breast and brow and clustering curls
Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard
To tell his story ere his reason goes.
And when I loved thee, as I've loved so oft,
Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and looked in
My heart to find some feeling like such love,
Believing I was still what I had been ;
And soon I found all faith had gone from me,
And the late glow of life—changing like clouds,
'Twas not the morn-blush widening into day,
But evening, coloured by the dying sun
While darkness is quick hastening :—I will tell
My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair
Cannot come near me—thus it is with me.

Souls alter not, and mine must progress still ;
And this I knew not when I flung away
My youth's chief aims. I ne'er supposed the loss
Of what few I retained ; for no resource
Awaits me—now behold the change of all.
I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest
In its clay prison ; this most narrow sphere—
It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires,
Which I cannot account for, nor explain,
But which I stifle not, being bound to trust
All feelings equally—to hear all sides :
Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live,
Referring to some state or life unknown. . . .

My selfishness is satiated not,
It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for
All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, is pain ;
I envy—how I envy him whose mind
Turns with its energies to some one end !
To elevate a sect, or a pursuit,

However mean—so my still baffled hopes
Seek out abstractions ; I would have but one
Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine ;
One rapture all my soul could fill—and this
Wild feeling places me in dream afar,
In some wide country, where the eye can see
No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
With shining towers and dwellings. I grow mad
Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds
Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp them all,
But must remain with this vile form. I look
With hope to age at last, which quenching much,
May let me concentrate the sparks it spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me
A craving after knowledge : the sole proof
Of a commanding will is in that power
Repressed ; for I beheld it in its dawn,
That sleepless harpy, with its budding wings,
And I considered whether I should yield
All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,
Finding a recompence in its wild eyes ;
And when I found that I should perish so,
I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever ;—
And I am left alone with my delights,—
So it lies in me a chained thing—still ready
To serve me, if I loose its slightest bond—
I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,
For I cannot so narrow me, but that
I still exceed it ; in their elements
My love would pass my reason—but since here
Love must receive its objects from this earth,
While reason will be chainless, the few truths
Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell

All love below ;—then what must be that love
 Which, with the object it demands, would quell
 Reason, tho' it soared with the seraphim ?
 No—what I feel may pass all human love,
 Yet fall far short of what my love should be ;
 And yet I seem more warped in this than aught
 For here myself stands out more hideously.
 I can forget myself in friendship, fame,
 Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

But I begin to know what thing hate is—
 To sicken, and to quiver, and grow white,
 And I myself have furnished its first prey.
 All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will,
 This selfishness, this still decaying frame . . .
 But I must never grieve while I can pass
 Far from such thoughts—as now—Andromeda !
 And she is with me—years roll, I shall change,
 But change can touch her not—so beautiful
 With her dark eyes, earnest and still, and hair
 Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze ;
 And one red-bean, all the storm leaves in heaven,
 Resting upon her eyes and face and hair,
 As she awaits the snake on the wet beach,
 By the dark rock, and the white wave just breaking
 At her feet ; quite naked and alone,—a thing
 You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that God
 Will come in thunder from the stars to save her.
 Let it pass—I will call another change.
 I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,
 Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
 And in the wane of life ; yet only so
 As to call up their fears, and there shall come
 A time requiring youth's best energies ;
 And strait I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,

And I rise triumphing over my decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm
'Twixt what I am and all that I would be.

But then to know nothing—to hope for nothing—
To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear,
Lest, losing them, all's lost, and nought remains.

There's some vile juggle with my reason here—
I feel I but explain to my own loss
These impulses—they live no less the same.
Liberty ! what though I despair—my blood
Rose not at a slave's name proudlier than now,
And sympathy obscured by sophistries.
Why have not I sought refuge in myself,
But for the woes I saw and could not stay—
And love !—do I not love thee, my Pauline ?

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
Utterly loveless—witness this belief
In poets, tho' sad change has come there too ;
No more I leave myself to follow them :
Unconsciously I measure me by them.
Let me forget it ; and I cherish most
My love of England—how her name—a word
Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat ! . .

Pauline, I could do any thing—not now—
All's fever—but when calm shall come again—
I am prepared—I have made life my own—
I would not be content with all the change
One frame should feel—but I have gone in thought
Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all life
When it is most alive—where strangest fate
New shapes it past surmise—the tales of men

Bit by some curse—or in the grasps of doom
 Half-visible and still increasing round,
 Or crowning their wide being's general aim. . . .

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,
 As one breathing his weakness to the ear
 Of pitying angel—clear as a winter flower ;
 A slight flower growing alone, and offering
 Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,
 Yet joyous and confiding, like the triumph
 Of a child—and why am I not worthy thee ?

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze
 Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,
 Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,
 Or open in the night of sounds, to look
 For the dim stars ; I can mount with the bird,
 Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves
 And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,
 Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens—
 Or like a fish breathe in the morning air
 In the misty sun-warm water—or with flowers
 And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun,
 Just as the storm comes—as a girl would look
 On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me—see how I could build
 A home for us, out of the world ; in thought—
 I am inspired—come with me, Pauline !

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
 Between the sullen river and the woods
 Waving and muttering—for the moonless night
 Has shaped them into images of life,
 Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,

Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.
Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell
Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting
Of thy soft breasts ; no—we will pass to morning—
Morning—the rocks, and vallies, and old woods.
How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,—
Half in the air, like creatures of the place,
Trusting the element—living on high boughs
That swing in the wind—look at the golden spray,
Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract,
Amid the broken rocks—shall we stay here
With the wild hawks?—no, ere the hot noon come
Dive we down—safe ;—see this our new retreat
Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,
Dark, tangled, old and green—still sloping down
To a small pool whose waters lie asleep
Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants
And tall trees over-arch to keep us in,
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,
And in the dreamy water one small group
Of two or three strange trees are got together,
Wondering at all around—as strange beasts herd
Together far from their own land—all wildness—
No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all,
And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters,
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,
And old grey stones lie making eddies there ;
The wild mice cross them dry-shod—deeper in—
Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in :
This is the very heart of the woods—all round,
Mountain-like, heaped above us ; yet even here
One pond of water gleams—far off the river
Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but one—
One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and wound
Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies
Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend

O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,
And thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ; farther on,
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined
To narrow it ; so, at length, a silver thread
It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep wood,
Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss and stone,
It joins its parent-river with a shout.
Up for the glowing day—leave the old woods :
See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky !
Nothing but sky appears, so close the roof
And grass of the hill-top level with the air—
Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats, laden
With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,
Floating away in the sun in some north sea.
Air, air—fresh life-blood—thin and searching air—
The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us :
Where small birds reel and winds take their delight.
Water is beautiful, but not like air.
See, where the solid azure waters lie,
Made as of thickened air, and down below,
The fern-ranks, like a forest spread themselves,
As tho' each pore could feel the element ;
Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way—
Float with me there, Pauline, but not like air.

Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set
On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains,
And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest,
And peer from their spread boughs. There they wave,
looking
At the muleteers, who whistle as they go
To the merry chime of their morning bells, and all
The little smoking cots, and fields, and banks,
And copses, bright in the sun ; my spirit wanders.

Hedge-rows for me—still, living, hedge-rows, where
 The bushes close, and clasp above, and keep
 Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel ;—
 But my soul saddens when it looks beyond ;
 I cannot be immortal, nor taste all.

○ God ! where does this tend—these struggling aims ! *
 What would I have ? what is this “sleep,” which
 seems

To bound all ? can there be a “waking” point

* Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment —mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre—celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait que ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'apaise par degrés, ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur soi-même.—Et par dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit toute particulière de mon ami rendent les changements presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu.—Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakspeare, de Raffaele, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est due bien plus à leur conception, qu'à leur mise en exécution . . . j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami—et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquiescer la seconde. Le mieux serait de bruler ceci ; mais que faire ?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'attendre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où l'on pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée que je ne saisis pas parfaitement lui est peut-être aussi intelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

Of crowning life? The soul would never rule—
 It would be first in all things—it would have
 Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that complete
 Commanding for commanding sickens it.
 The last point that I can trace is, rest beneath
 Some better essence than itself—in weakness;
 This is “myself”—not what I think should be,
 And what is that I hunger for but God?

My God, my God! let me for once look on thee
 As tho’ nought else existed: we alone.
 And as creation crumbles, my soul’s spark
 Expands till I can say, “Even from myself
 “I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love thee;
 “I do not plead my rapture in thy works
 “For love of thee—or that I feel as one
 “Who cannot die—but there is that in me
 “Which turns to thee, which loves, or which should
 love.”

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?
 Why have I laboured to put out my life?
 Is it not in my nature to adore,
 And e’en for all my reason do I not
 Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him?—*Now.*
 Can I forego the trust that he loves me?
 Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .
 O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed,
 I have denied thee calmly—do I not
 Pant when I read of thy consummate deeds,
 And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash
 The brightest gleams of earth’s philosophy?
 Do I not shake to hear aught question thee? . . .

If I am erring save me, madden me,

Take from me powers, and pleasures—let me die
Ages, so I see thee : I am knit round
As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,
Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes
Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee,
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less—
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross—
Or witnessing thy bursting from the tomb !

A mortal, sin's familiar friend doth here
Avow that he will give all earth's reward,
But to believe and humbly teach the faith,
In suffering, and poverty, and shame,
Only believing he is not unloved. . . .

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever !
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Deserting me : and old shades gathering on ;
Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,
And chiefly, I am glad that I have said
That love which I have ever felt for thee,
But seldom told ; our hearts so beat together,
That speech is mockery, but when dark hours come ;
And I feel sad ; and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange ;
A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove.
Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which thro' thee I began, and which I end,
Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
That I am thine, and more than ever now—
That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink,
No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss,
And that I still may hope to win it back.
Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not think all calm,
For wild dreams followed me, and bore me off,

And all was indistinct. Ere one was caught
Another glanced : so dazzled by my wealth,
Knowing not which to leave nor which to choose,
For all my thoughts so floated, nought was fixed—
And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who shadowed out the stages of all life,
And so thou badest me tell this my first stage ;—
'Tis done ; and even now I feel all dim the shift
Of thought. These are my last thoughts ; I discern
Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good.
And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now,
In the dim hush of night—that I have done—
With fears and sad forebodings : I look thro'
And say, " E'en at the last I have her still,
" With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven,
" When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,
" And clouds float white in the sun like broods of
swans."

How the blood lies upon her cheek, all spread
As thinned by kisses ; only in her lips
It wells and pulses like a living thing,
And her neck looks, like marble misted o'er
With love-breath, a dear thing to kiss and love,
Standing beneath me—looking out to me,
As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought but me ;
Leave me not. All these words are wild and weak,
Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped so low
But to behold thee purer by my side,
To show thou art my breath—my life—a last
Resource—an extreme want : never believe
Aught better could so look to thee, nor seek
Again the world of good thoughts left for me.
There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,

Each equal in their radiant course. There were
Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept
For his own joy, and his waves broke on them
Without a choice. And there was a dim crowd
Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.
And a star left his peers and came with peace
Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him.
And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,
And the crew wandered in its bowers, and plucked
Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes for home.
And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,
And he said, "I am singled out by God,
"No sin must touch me." I am very weak,
But what I would express is,—Leave me not,
Still sit by me—with beating breast, and hair
Loosened—watching earnest by my side,
Turning my books, or kissing me when I
Look up—like summer wind. Be still to me
A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,
A reason, a solution, and a clue.
You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules :
I hope in myself—and hope, and pant, and love—
You'll find me better—know me more than when
You loved me as I was. Smile not ; I have
Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on you.

No more of the past—I'll look within no more—
I have too trusted to my own wild wants—
Too trusted to myself—to intuition.
Draining the wine alone in the still night,
And seeing how—as gathering films arose,
As by an inspiration life seemed bare
And grinning in its vanity, and ends
Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as fixed,
And others suddenly became all soul,

As a fair witch turned an old hag at night.
No more of this—we will go hand in hand,
I will go with thee, even as a child,
Looking no further than thy sweet commands.
And thou hast chosen where this life shall be—
The land which gave me thee shall be our home,
Where nature lies a' wild amid her lakes
And snow-swathed mountains, and vast pines all girt
With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare,
Suffering none to view her but a race
Most stunted and deformed—like the mute dwarfs
Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.
And there (the time being when the heavens are thick
With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing
Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,
Or telling me old stories of dead knights.
Or I will read old lays to thee—how she,
The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave
With power to love, and to be loved, and live.
Or we will go together, like twin gods
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
Over the dead—to call and to awake—
Over the unshaped images which lie
Within my mind's cave—only leaving all
That tells of the past doubts. So when spring comes,
And sunshine comes again like an old smile,
And the fresh waters, and awakened birds,
And budding woods await us—I shall be
Prepared, and we will go and think again,
And all old loves shall come to us—but changed
As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled
before;
Feeling God loves us, and that all that errs,
Is a strange dream which death will dissipate;
And then when I am firm we'll seek again

My own land, and again I will approach
My old designs, and calmly look on all
The works of my past weakness, as one views
Some scene where danger met him long before.
Ah ! that such pleasant life should be but dreamed !

But whate'er come of it—and tho' it fade,
And tho' ere the cold morning all be gone
As it will be ;—tho' music wait for me,
And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing like sin,
Which steals back softly on a soul half saved ;
And I be first to deny all, and despise
This verse, and these intents which seem so fair :
Still this is all my own, this moment's pride,
No less I make an end in perfect joy.
E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear
Possessed me. I well knew my weak resolves,
I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep
Over its treasures—as one half afraid
To make his riches definite—but now
These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
I shall not know again that nameless care,
Lest leaving all undone in youth, some new
And undreamed end reveal itself too late :
For this song shall remain to tell for ever,
That when I lost all hope of such a change,
Suddenly Beauty rose on me again.
No less I make an end in perfect joy,
For I, having thus again been visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,
And tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come,
Some little word shall light it up again,
And I shall see all clearer and love better ;
I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,
As one who has a right ; and I shall live
With poets—calmer—purer still each time,

And beauteous shapes will come to me again,
And unknown secrets will be trusted me,
Which were not mine when wavering—but now
I shall be priest and lover, as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,
And love; and as one just escaped from death
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
He lives indeed—so, I would lean on thee;
Thou must be ever with me—most in gloom
When such shall come—but chiefly when I die,
For I seem dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant—and live thou for ever,
And be to all what thou hast been to me—
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me,
Know my last state is happy—free from doubt,
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well!

RICHMOND,
October 22, 1832.

Paracelsus.

Paracelsus.

PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS.
FESTUS and MICHAL, his friends.
APRILE, an Italian Poet.

I.—PARACELUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*Würzburg—a garden in the environs.* 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELUS, MICHAL.

Par. Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!
Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!
For if you would remember me aright—
As I was born to be—you must forget

All fitful, strange, and moody waywardness
 Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
 Only on moments such as these, dear friends !
 —My heart no truer, but my words and ways
 More true to it : as Michal, some months hence,
 Will say, —“ this autumn was a pleasant time,”
 For some few sunny days ; and overlook
 Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
 Autumn would fain be sunny—I would look
 Liker my nature's truth ; and both are frail,
 And both beloved for all their frailty !

Mich.

Aureole !

Par. Drop by drop !—she is weeping like a child !
 Not so ! I am content—more than content—
 Nay, Autumn wins you best by this its mute
 Appeal to sympathy for its decay !
 Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
 Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down,
 Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,
 That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
 Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among !
 Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
 Shall vex that ash that overlooks you both,
 So proud it wears its berries ? Ah ! at length,
 The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
 Sequestered nest ! This kingdom, limited
 Alone by one old populous green wall,
 Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
 Grey crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,
 Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
 Which, look through, near, this way, and it appears
 A stubble-field, or a cane-brake—a marsh
 Of bulrush whitening in the sun : laugh now !
 Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
 Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
 Yon painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,

Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps !

Mick. In truth we have lived carelessly and well !

Par. And shall, my perfect pair—each, trust me, born
For the other ; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune ? Stay ! Whene'er
That plant shall wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success ! Ah, see ! the sun sinks broad
Behind St. Saviour's : wholly gone, at last !

Fest. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile !
You are ours to-night at least ; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, the thought came back
That none could leave what he so seemed to love :
But that last look destroys my dream—that look !
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star !
How far was Würzburg, with its church and spire,
And garden-walls, and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting ?

Par. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy, to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks, and words,—
Need never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to Fancy's busy aid
To fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here ;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget

Itself in them, assured how well they are.
 Beside, this Festus knows, he thinks me one
 Whom quiet and its charms attract in vain,
 One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
 Too fill'd with airy hopes to make account
 Of soft delights which free hearts garner up :
 Whereas, behold how much our sense of all
 That's beauteous proves alike ! When Festus learns
 That every common pleasure of the world
 Affects me as himself ; that I have just
 As varied appetites for joy derived
 From common things ; a stake in life, in short,
 Like his ; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
 That life affords not, would as soon destroy ;—
 He may convince himself, that, this in view,
 I shall act well advised : and last, because,
 Though heaven and earth, and all things, were at stake,
 Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve !

Fest. True : and the eve is deepening, and we sit
 As little anxious to begin our talk
 As though to-morrow I could open it
 As we paced arm in arm the cheerful town
 At sun-dawn ; and continue it by fits
 (Old Tritheim busied with his class the while)
 In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
 Half frightened by the awful tones around ;
 And here at home unbosom all the rest
 From even-blush to midnight : but, to-morrow ! . . .
 Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind ?
 We two were brothers, and henceforth the world
 Will rise between us :—all my freest mind ?
 'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !

Par. Oh, say on !
 Devise some test of love—some arduous feat
 To be performed for you—say on ! If night
 Be spent the while, the better ! Recall how oft

My wondrous plans, and dreams, and hopes, and fears,
 Have—never wearied you . . . oh, no ! . . . as I
 Recall, and never vividly as now,
 Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
 And its green hills were all the world to us,
 And still increasing to this night, which ends
 My further stay at Würzburg . . . Oh, one day
 You shall be very proud ! Say on, dear friends !

Fest. In truth ? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed,
 Rather than yours ; for vain all projects seem
 To stay your course : I said my latest hope
 Is fading even now. A story tells
 Of some far embassy despatched to buy
 The favour of an eastern king, and how
 The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
 Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime :
 Just so, the value of repose and love,
 I meant should tempt you, better far than I
 You seem to comprehend—and yet desist
 No whit from projects where repose nor love
 Have part.

Par. Once more ? Alas ! as I forbode !

Fest. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
 To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish ?
 That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
 Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
 Reject God's great commission—and so die !
 You bid me listen for your true love's sake :
 Yet how has grown that love ? Even in a long
 And patient cherishing of the selfsame spirit
 It now would quell ; as though a mother hoped
 To stay the lusty manhood of the child
 Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
 Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
 From aught which marked me out apart from men :

I would have lived their life, and died their death,
 Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny :
 But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
 Taught me to know mankind and know myself ;
 And now that I am strong and full of hope,
 That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
 Save those your earnest words made plain to me ;
 Now, that I touch the brink of my design,
 When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
 A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
 And Festus ponders gravely !

Fest.

When you deign

To hear my purpose . . .

Par.

Hear it ? I can say

Beforehand all this evening's conference !
 'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses : first,
 Or he declares, or I, the leading points
 Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end,
 And what God's will—no two faiths e'er agreed
 As his with mine : next, each of us allows
 Faith should be acted on as best we may :
 Accordingly, I venture to submit
 A plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
 The path which God's will seems to authorize :
 Well—he discerns much good in it, avows
 This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
 A danger here, to be avoided—there,
 An oversight to be repaired : at last
 Our two minds go together—all the good
 Approved by him, I gladly recognize ;
 All he counts bad, I thankfully discard ;
 And nought forbids my looking up at last
 For some stray comfort in his cautious brow—
 When, lo ! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks
 Some innate and inexplicable germ
 Of failure in my schemes ; so that at last

It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though there were no God :
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Lusts of the world, Festus abhors the most—
But which these tenets sanctify at once ;
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

Mich. Is it so, Festus ?
He speaks so calmly and kindly—is it so ?

Par. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design ; laugh loud that God should send
Vast longings to direct us ; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold ; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it !
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Fest. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it ?—for his sake, not yours ? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you ;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words,
Erringly apprehended—a new creed,
Ill understood—begot rash trust in you,
And shared in your undoing.

Par. Choose your side :
Hold or renounce : but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.

Fest. Prove that to me—but that ! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you ; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect ; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth !

You smile ; but I had gathered from slow thought—
 Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
 Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain :
 But it all leaves me at my need : in shreds
 And fragments I must venture what remains.

Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should
 scorn . . .

Fest. Stay, Michal : Aureole, I speak guardedly
 And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
 This is no ill-considered choice of yours—
 No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
 Not from your own confiding words alone
 Am I aware your passionate heart long since
 Gave birth to, nourished, and at length matures
 This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
 Where I was born your elder by some years
 Only to watch you fully from the first :
 In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
 Even then---'twas mine to have you in my view
 As you had your own soul and those intents
 Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
 With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
 Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
 Whom, here at Wurzburg, Tritheim deigns to teach
 A portion of his lore : and not the best
 Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
 Came earnest as you came ; resolved, like you,
 To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
 By patient toil a wide renown like his.
 And this new ardour which supplants the old,
 I watched, too ; 'twas significant and strange,
 In one matched to his soul's content at length
 With rivals in the search for Wisdom's prize,
 To see the sudden pause, the total change ;
 From contest, the transition to repose—
 From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,

To a blank idleness ; yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
That careless bearing, free from all pretence
Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
What it professed to praise—though not so well
Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce as brief,
Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed—
That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,
I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to spring
Upon his foe's throat ; but it was not thus :
Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
That you prepared to task to the uttermost
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim,
Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
In scope that it included their best flights,
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
In place of many,—the secret of the world,
Of man, and man's true purpose, path, and fate :
—That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
This purpose, with the sages of the Past,
Have struck upon a way to this, if all
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW :
And that this aim shall differ from a host
Of aims alike in character and kind,
Mostly in this,—to seek its own reward
In itself only, not an alien end
To blend therewith ; no hope, nor fear, nor joy,
Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
Devotion to sustain you or betray :

Thus you aspire.

Par. You shall not state it thus .
 I should not differ from the dreamy crew
 You speak of. I profess no other share
 In the selection of my lot, than this,
 A ready answer to the will of God
 Who summons me to be his organ : all
 Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
 No better than your sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
 God sets before you ; and 'tis doubtless need
 That he appoint no less the way of praise
 Than the desire to praise ; for, though I hold
 With you, the setting forth such praise to be
 The natural end and service of a man,
 And think such praise is best attained when man
 Attains the general welfare of his kind—
 Yet, this, the end, is not the instrument.
 Presume not to serve God apart from such
 Appointed channel as He wills shall gather
 Imperfect tributes—for that sole obedience
 Valued, perchance. He seeks not that his altars
 Blaze—careless how, so that they do but blaze.
 Suppose this, then ; that God selected you
 To know (heed well your answers, for my faith
 Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
 I cannot think you dare annex to such
 Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
 An intense hope, nor let your gifts create
 Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
 Conducive to success—make destiny
 Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search
 Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
 Whether you have not rather wild desire
 For this distinction, than security
 Of its existence ; whether you discern

The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
 Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
 Clear as your yearning to be singled out
 For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

Par. (After a pause.) No, I have nought to fear!

● Who will may know
 The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
 It be so?—if indeed the strong desire
 Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour break
 Upon the outset of my path alone,
 And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
 Shall I require to my authentic mission
 Than this fierce energy?—this instinct striving
 Because its nature is to strive?—enticed
 By the security of no broad course,
 With no success forever in its eyes!
 How know I else such glorious fate my own,
 But in the restless irresistible force
 That works within me? Is it for human will
 To institute such impulses?—still less,
 To disregard their promptings? What should I
 Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,
 Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God
 Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!
 Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
 Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
 What full-grown power informs her from the first,
 Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
 The silent boundless regions of the sky!
 Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear
 Their holding light his charge, when every hour
 That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
 This for the faith in which I trust; and hence
 I can abjure so well the idle arts
 These pedants strive to learn and teach; Black Arts,
 Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—

Let others prize : too intimate a tie
 Connects me with our God ! A sullen fiend
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
 To help me—what are these, at best, beside
 God helping, God directing everywhere,
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
 And every object shall be charged to strike,
 Teach, gratify, her master God appoints ?
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and free !
 I can devote myself ; I have a life
 To give ; I, singled out for this, the One !
 Think, think ; the wide east, where old Wisdom sprung ;
 The bright south, where she dwelt ; the hopeful north,
 All are passed o'er—it lights on me ! 'Tis time
 New hopes should animate the world, new light
 Should dawn from new revealings to a race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long ; so shall
 The heaven reserved for us, at last receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
 Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below.

Fest. My words have their old fate and make faint
 stand

Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—
 Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example ; seeking there
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent ?
 —So lift yourself into their airy place,
 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
 Pronounced inextricable, true !—but left
 Far less confused ? A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
 Might do much at their vigour's waning-point ;

Succeeding with new-breathed and earnest force,
 As at old games a runner snatched the torch
 From runner still : this way success might be.
 But you have coupled with your enterprise,
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
 What books are in the desert ? writes the sea
 The secret of her yearning in vast caves
 Where yours will fall the first of human feet ?
 Has Wisdom sate there and recorded aught
 You press to read ? Why turn aside from her
 To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
 Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
 By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn ?
 Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay.
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
 She called an endless curse on, so it came—
 Or, worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
 Ignoblest troops that never heard her voice,
 Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
 Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be !
 Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
 Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone :
 Thick like a glory round the Stagyrte
 Your rivals throng, the sages : here stand you !
 Whate'er you may protest, knowledge is not
 Paramount in your love ; or for her sake
 You would collect all help from every source—
 Rival or helper, friend, foe, all would merge
 In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.

Par.

What shall I say ?

Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
 By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
 As from without some master, so it seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current : this but ill

Expresses what I would convey—but rather
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
So became manifest. I knew not then
What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
Were laid away in some great trance—the ages
Coming and going all the while—till dawned
His true time's advent, and could then record
The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed, --
Then I might tell more of the breath so light
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers warm
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
And having this within me and about me
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes, and woods
Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
The ever-moving concourse of mankind!
Believe that ere I joined them—ere I knew
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consigned to me within its ranks—while yet
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure --
'Twas then that least supportable appeared
A station with the brightest of the crowd,
A portion with the proudest of them all!
And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect—that I must thenceforth die,
Or elevate myself far, far above
The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
At once to trample on, yet save mankind—
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf—to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them—to perish, winning

Eternal weal in the act : as who should dare
 Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
 That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
 No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep :
 Yet never to be mixed with men so much
 As to have part even in my own work—share
 In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
 I would withdraw from their officious praise,
 Would gently put aside their profuse thanks :
 Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
 Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
 Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;
 When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
 His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
 Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
 His realm ; and he points, smiling, to his scarf,
 Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet,
 Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the east,
 Where these must be displayed !

Fest.

Good : let us hear

No more about your nature, “ which first shrank
 “ From all that marked you out apart from men ! ”

Jur. I touch on that ; these words but analyse
 That first mad impulse— ’twas as brief as fond ;
 For as I gazed again upon the show,
 I soon distinguished here and there a shape
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
 Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
 Interpret my own thoughts :—“ Behold the clue
 “ To all,” I rashly said, “ and what I pine
 “ To do, these have accomplished : we are peers !
 “ They know, and therefore rule : I, too, will know !
 You were beside me, Festus, as you say ;
 You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom Fame
 Is lavish to attest the lords of mind ;
 Not pausing to make sure the prize in view

Would satiate my cravings when obtained—
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder Trithem schools
But faced me, all-sufficient, all-content,
Or staggered only at his own strong wits ;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
That struggle ; suffice it, that I loathed myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me : and this lasted till one night
When, as I sate revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said—" See'st thou not,
" Desponding child, whence came defeat and loss ?
" Even from thy strength. Consider : hast thou gazed
" Presumptuously on Wisdom's countenance,
" No veil between ; and can thy hands which falter
" Unguided by thy brain the mighty sight
" Continues to absorb, pursue their task
" On earth like these around thee—what their sense
" Which radiance ne'er distracted, clear describes ?
" If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their life,
" Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
" Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
" In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
" But have some idol of thine own to dress
" With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,
" But to become a star to men for ever.
" Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
" The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.
" Look one step onward, and secure that step."
And I smiled as one never smiles but once ;
Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
And God himself, and all God's intercourse

With the human mind ; I understood, no less,
 My fellow's studies, whose true worth I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
 And softer came the voice—"There is a way—
 "'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
 "With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first
 "Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength
 "Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
 "Apart from all reward?" And last it breathed—
 "Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by thee,
 "Be sure, even to the end!"—I answered not,
 Knowing Him. As He spoke, I was endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will ;
 And when He ceased, my brow was sealed His own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue
 Thenceforward?—pregnant with vast consequence—
 Teeming with grand results—loaded with fate ;
 So that when quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone—at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !
 I see my way as birds their trackless way—
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not : but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
 In some time—his good time—I shall arrive :
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time !
Mick. Vex him no further, Festus ; it is so !
Fest. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
 Of many a mighty spirit gone that way.

You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
But they were famous in their day—the proofs
Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Par. Their light ! the sum of all is briefly this :
They laboured, and grew famous ; and the fruits
Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth,
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils, which of all your Gods abates ?
No ; I reject and spurn them utterly,
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns ?

Fest.

And yet

As strong delusions have prevailed ere now :
Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin ; I have heard of such—yourself
Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

Mich. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint
Through the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn afar amid the clouds ?

Par. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale ?
For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
An age ago ; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest, so
Instinct with better light let in by Death,
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
Dim memories ; as now, when seems once more
The goal in sight again : all which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me

Than my belief, explained to you or no.

Fest. And who am I to challenge and dispute
That clear belief? I put away all fear.

Mich. Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall
Be great and grand—and all for us!

Aur. No, sweet!
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'Tis well—but there our intercourse must end:
I never will be served by those I serve.

Fest. Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,
Disguise it how you may! 'Tis true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us;
'Tis but a spot as yet; but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.

How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love?

It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought—I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much: let be.

That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval

Reward you; put reward aside; alone

You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
None share your triumph—still you must retain
Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,

I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched

By gentle friends who made my cause their own;
They should ward off Fate's envy—the great gift,
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.

If danger daunted me or ease seduced,

How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach !

Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I ! And you ?
Do you not feel this ?—say that you feel this !

Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly helps !
My course allures for its own sake—its sole
Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
Your sages say, " if human, therefore weak : "
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .
No matter ! I deny myself but little

In waiving all assistance save its own—
Would there were some real sacrifice to make !
Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
While I must be content with keeping mine.

Fest. But do not cut yourself from human weal ?
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind,
For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them
By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole ! No—
There are strange punishments for such. (Give up
Although no visible good flow thence) some part
Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
Say, say almost to God—" I have done all
" For her—not for myself ! "

Par. And who, but lately,
Was to rejoice in my success like you ?
Whom should I love but both of you ?

Fest. I know not :
But know this, you, that 'tis no wish of mine
You should abjure the lofty claims you make ;

Although I can no longer seek, indeed,
 To overlook the truth, that there will be
 A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
 Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :
 —A being knowing not what love is. Hear me !
 You are endowed with faculties which bear
 Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
 To summon meaner spirits to do their will,
 And gather round them at their need ; inspiring
 Such with a love themselves can never feel—
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
 I know not if you joy in this or no,
 Or ever dream that common men can live
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make
 Their heart's sole treasure : the affections seem
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste
 Or die : and this strange quality accords,
 I know not how, with you ; sits well upon
 That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
 An eating brand—a shame. I dare not judge you :
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
 There's no alternative—I own you one
 Of higher order, under other laws
 Than bind us ; therefore, curb not one bold glance !
 'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .

Mick. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast those hopes away,
 And stay with us ! An angel warns me, too,
 Man should be humble ; you are very proud :
 And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such !
 He warns me not to dread a quick repulse,
 Nor slow defeat, but a complete success !
 You will find all you seek, and perish so !

Par. (*After a pause.*) Are these the barren first fruits of
 my life ?
 Is love like this the natural lot of all ?
 How many years of pain might one such hour

O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
What shall I say, if not that I desire
To merit this your love; and will, dear friends,
In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
See, the great moon! and 'ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this—
If I am like to compass what I seek
By the untried career I chuse; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul—for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labours and the precepts of old time,
I have not slightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe:
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth;
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blinds it, and makes all error: and, "*to know*"
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us, where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour: chance—for hitherto, your sage
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,
As little knows he what unlocks their fount;
And men have oft grown old among their books

To die, case-hardened in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what long years
Of unremitted labour ne'er performed:
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
That autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
As the midges in the sun, have oft given vent
To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds it up,
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly? See this soul of ours!
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
By age and waste, set free at last by death:
Why is it, flesh enthralls it or enthrones?
What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange chance
Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,
When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess, or languor—oftenest death's approach—
Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,
Unmoved—and he goes mad; and from the wreck
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
Bars in the spirit! We may not be doomed
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God!
But elevate the race at once! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,

All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
See if we cannot beat thy angels yet !
Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope ?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's ?
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust ?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me ?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from Ilis, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to this narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
Still, all a dream ! Thus was life scorned ; but life
Shall yet be crowned : twine amaranth ! I am priest !
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence—parting with a youth
Like theirs who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust ! And though I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the rest—
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections, laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved ; till then—till then . . .
Ah ! the time-wiling loitering of a page
Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring

The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
 The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
 Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types !
 See how they look on me—I triumph now !
 But one thing, Festus, Michal !—I have told
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal : say—
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this ?

Fest. I do believe !

Mich. I ever did believe !

Par. Those words shall never fade from out my brain !
 This earnest of the end shall never fade !
 Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
 Two points in the adventure of the diver :
 One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge ?
 One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl ?
 Festus, I plunge !

Fest. I wait you when you rise !



II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*Constantinople.*—“ *The House of the Greek-
 conjuror.*” 1521.

PARACELSUS.

Over the waters in the vapourous west
 The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold,
 Behind the outstretched city, which between,
 With all that length of domes and minarets,
 Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs
 Like a Turk verse along a scimeter.
 There lie, thou saddest writing, and awhile
 Relieve my aching sight. 'Tis done at last !
 Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat

Could win me to this act ! 'Tis as yon cloud
Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Come to a pause with knowledge ; scan for once
The heights already reach'd, without regard
To the extent above ; fairly compute
What I have clearly gained ; for once excluding
My future which should finish and fulfil
All half-gains, and conjectures, and mere hopes---
And this, because a fortune-teller bids
His credulous enquirers write thus much,
Their previous life's attainment, in his book,
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
Make that life perfect : here, accordingly,
'Mid the uncouth recordings of such dupes,
—Scrawled in like fashion, lie my life's results !

These few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many lands,
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly massed, as when acquired ; himself
Too bent on gaining more to calmly stay
And scrutinize the little which he gained :
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
And a mad lover's ditty—lies the whole !

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
A whole life,—mine ! No thought to turn to act,
No problem for the fancy, but a life
Spent and decided, wasted past recall,
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, turn the page
And take its chance,—thus : what, concerning “life”
Does this remembrancer set down ?—“ We say

" 'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.'
 "'Tis the mere echo of time; and he whose heart
 " Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
 " Was copied from a human tongue, can never
 " Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
 " Nevertheless long seasons come and go,
 " Till some one hour's experience shows what nought,
 " He deemed, could clearer show; and ever after
 " An altered brow, and eye, and gait, and speech
 " Attest that now he knows the adage true
 " 'Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.' "

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same time
 As well as any: let my hour speak now !

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill—
 'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance;
 I cannot keep on the stretch; 'tis no back-shrinking—
 For let the least assurance dawn, some end
 To my toil seem possible, and I proceed
 At any price, by any sacrifice:
 Else, here I pause: the old Greek's prophecy
 Is like to turn out true—" I shall not quit
 " His chamber till I know what I desire !"
 Was it the light wind sung it, o'er the sea ?

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once
 Admitted, gains strength every moment ! Rest !
 Where kept that thought so long ? this throbbing brain
 To cease—this beating heart to cease—its crowd
 Of gnawing thoughts to cease !—To dare let down
 My strung, so high-strung brain—to dare unnerve
 My harassed o'ertasked frame—to know my place,
 —My portion, my reward, my failure even,
 Assigned, made sure for ever !—To lose myself
 Among the common creatures of the world—

To draw some gain from having been a man—
Neither to hope nor fear—to live at length !
Oh, were it but in failure, to have rest !
What, sunk insensibly so deep ? Has all
Been undergone for this ? Was this the prayer
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal ? Had I gone
Carelessly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes ; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
And lessen punishment,—I could not chuse
An humbler mood to wait for the decree !
No, no, there needs not this ; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task :
The rest is God's concern—mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-courts so far
That he desries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whose wrath he met unquailing, follow sly
And fasten on him, fairly past their power,
If where he stands he dares but stay ; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint and fall at last,
—Knowing a charm to baffle them ; behold,
He bares his front—a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams, and glooms !
If he be priest henceforth, or if he wake
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,—
Both well ! What's failure or success to me ?
I have subdued my life to the one end
Ordained life ; there alone I cannot doubt,
That only way I may be satisfied.
Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vows,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,

Which gave, in truth, my nature freely up,
In what it should be, more than what it was—
Consenting that whatever passions slept,
Whatever impulses lay unmatured,
Should wither in the germ,—but scarce foreseeing
That the soil, doomed thus to perpetual waste,
Would seem one day, remembered in its youth
Beside the parched sand-tract which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up doves so frail
I felt them not ; yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first—
If not love, say, like love : there was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside ;
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise,
And counsel, and grave fears—where is he now ?
Or the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better : I am saved
The sad review of an ambitious youth,
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
I have made life consist of one idea :
Ere that was master—up till that was born—
I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn
I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell

Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for futurity,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
And since that morn all life has been forgot ;
All is one day—one only step between
The outset and the end : one tyrant aim,
Absorbing all, fills up the interval—
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Through a career or friendly or opposed
To its existence : life, death, light and shade
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not instruments of sorrow or delight :
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
Into assured light in some branching mine,
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—
And all the beauty, all the wonder tell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;
Men saw the robe—I saw the august form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of land —
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too !
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens ; last
I sicken on a dead gulph, streaked with light
From its own putrifying depths alone !
Then—God was pledged to take me by the hand ;
Now—any miserable juggler bends
My pride to him. All seems alike at length :
Who knows which are the wise and which the fools ?
God may take pleasure in confounding pride
By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—

He who stoops lowest may find most—in short,
 I am here ; and all seems natural ; I start not :
 And never having glanced behind to know
 If I had kept my primal light from wane,
 Am thus insensibly grown—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter :

And more bitter,
 To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin—
 Plague beneath plague—the last turning the first
 To light beside its darkness. Better weep
 My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
 In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win
 Some startling secret in their stead !—a tincture
 Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
 Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
 To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it
 Indignant back, I might convince myself
 My aims remained as ever supreme and pure !
 Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
 That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,—
 That, though I sink, another may succeed ?
 O God, the despicable heart of us !
 Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
 Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;
 At all events, once launched, to hold straight on :
 For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
 Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
 Full consummation ! As a man, you had
 A certain share of strength, and that is gone
 Already in the getting these you boast.
 Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
 " Great master, we are here indeed ; dragged forth

"To light: this hast thou done; be glad! now, seek
 "The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting!"

And yet 'tis surely much, 'tis very much,
 Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
 To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
 Arrive with inexhaustible light; and lo,
 I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not!
 While I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
 And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast?
 Knowledge it seemed, and Power, and Recompense!
 Was she who glided through my room of nights,—
 Who laid my head on her soft knees, and smoothed
 The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
 When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
 God! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake?
 God! Thou art Mind! Unto the Master-Mind
 Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!
 All else I will endure: if, as I stand
 Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
 I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die:
 And if no trace of my career remain,
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
 In these bright chambers, level with the air,
 See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
 Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!
 Hold me before the frequency of thy scraphs,
 And say—"I crushed him, lest he should disturb
 "My law. Men must not know their strength: behold,
 "Weak and alone, how near he raised himself!"

But if delusions trouble me—and Thou,

Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
Throughout my toil and wanderings, dost intend
To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour—
To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From thine own blinding crown—to smile, and guide
This puny hand, and let the work so framed
Be styled my work,—hear me ! I covet not
An influx of new power, an angel's soul :
It were no marvel then—but I have reached
Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a man !
Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith—one only hour !
That I may cover with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain way
To mould them, and completing them, possess !

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,
And why dispute it now ? I'll not believe
But some undoubted warning long ere this
Had reached me : stars would write his will in heaven,
As once when a labarum was not deemed
Too much for the old founder of these walls.
Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous : yet, till late, my course
So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
Though such were meant to follow as its fruit,
Could find no place in it. True, I am worn ;
But who clothes summer, who is Life itself ?
God, that created all things, can renew !
And then, though after-life to please me now
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
As bursts the flower from earth, and root, and stalk ?
What use were punishment, unless some sin
Be first detected ? let me know that first !

(Aprile, from within)

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
 Long ago, but all too low,
 So that scarce a thought was stirred
 If really spoke the voice or no:
 I heard it in my youth, when first
 The waters of my life outburst:
 But now their stream elbbs faint, I hear
 The voice, still low, but fatal-clear—
 As if all Poets, that God meant
 Should save the world, and therefore lent
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
 To do his work, or lightly used
 Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
 And mourn, cast off by him forever,—
 As if these leaned in airy ring
 To call me; this the song they sing.

“Lost, lost! yet come,
 With our wan troop make thy home:
 Come, come! for we
 Will not breathe, so much as breathe
 Reproach to thee!
 Knowing what thou sink'st beneath:
 So we sank in those old years,
 We who bid thee, come! thou last
 Who, a living man, hast life o'erpast,
 And all together we, thy peers,
 Will pardon ask for thee, the last
 Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
 With those who watch, but work no more—
 Who gaze on life, but live no more:
 And yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
 God's message which our lips, too weak,
 Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
 Our fault: such trust, and all, a dream!

So we chose thee a bright birth-place
 Where the richness ran to flowers—
 Couldst not sing one song for grace?
 Nor make one blossom man's and ours?
 Must one more recreant to his race
 Die with unexerted powers,
 And join us, leaving as he found
 The world, he was to loosen, bound?
 Anguish! ever and for ever;
 Still beginning, ending never!
 Yet, lost and last one, come!
 How couldst understand, alas,
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,
 As their shades did glance and pass
 Before thee, night and day?
 Thou wert blind, as we were dumb:
 Once more, therefore, come, O come!
 How shall we better arm the spirit
 Who next shall thy post of life inherit—
 How guard him from thy ruin?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not save!"

APRILE enters.

A spirit better armed, succeeding me?
 Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at last?
 Art thou the Poet who shall save the world?
 Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine eyes on mine.
 Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes on mine!
Par. Ha, ha! why crouchest not? Am I not king?
 So torture is not wholly unavailing!
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair?

Art thou the Sage I only seemed to be,
 Myself of after-time, my very self
 With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
 Who robs me of my prize and takes my place
 For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?
 I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
 That such might come, and thou didst hear the while!

Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine; my hair
 Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale,
 True, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,
 The siren's! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained!
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest?
 I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed
 In after-time; that I should hear the earth
 Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Par. Not so! I know thee, I am not thy dupe!
 Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 Even as thou sayest, succeeding to my place,
 Reaping my sowing—as I scorned to reap
 The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,
 As if, except through me, thou had'st searched or striven
 Ay, tell the world! Degrade me, after all,
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!

Apr. Nay, sing them to me; I shall envy not:
 Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will stand
 Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
 To fill thy throne—but none shall ever know!
 Sing to me: for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart-springs, as some crystal-shaft
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
 After long time—so thou reveal'st my soul!

I will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

Par. (His secret ! my successor's secret—fool !)
am he that aspired to KNOW—and thou ?

Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved !

Par. Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed.

Apr.

Thou deem'st

That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,
Born for thy fate—because I could not curb
My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment ; yet neglected all the means
Of realising even the frailest joy ;
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march,
O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
Neglecting nought below for aught above,
Despising nothing and ensuring all—
Nor that I could (my time to come again)
Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own :
Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.
I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

O ye who armed me at such cost,

Your faces shall I bear to see

With your gifts even yet on me ?—

Par. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature after all !
Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :
They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed
To echo one foreboding of my heart
So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands
With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair
Which turns to it, as if they were akin :
And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
Nearly set free, so far they rise above
The painful fruitless striving of that brow
And enforced knowledge of those lips, firm-set
In slow despondency's eternal sigh !

Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause ?)

Be calm, I charge thee, by thy fealty !

Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be loved.

First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,

The forms of earth. No ancient hunter, raised

Up to the gods by his renown ; no nymph

Supposed the sweet soil of a woodland tree,

Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,

Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king,

Regal with his white locks ; no youth who stands

Silent and very calm amid the throng,

His right hand ever hid beneath his robe

Until the tyrant pass ; no law-giver ;

No swan-soft woman, rubbed with lucid oils,

Given by a god for love of her—too hard !

Each passion sprung from man, conceived by man,

Would I express and clothe it in its right form,

Or blend with others struggling in one form,

Or show repressed by an ungainly form.

For, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit

With a fit frame to execute his will—

Ay, even unconsciously to work his will—

You should be moved no less beside some strong,

Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,

Endeavouring to subdue it, and inform it

With its own splendour ! All this I would do,

And I would say, this done, " God's sprites being made,

" He grants to each a sphere to be its world,

" Appointed with the various objects needed

" To satisfy its spiritual desires ;

" So, I create a world for these my shapes

" Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength ! "

And, at the word, I would contrive and paint

Woods, valleys, rocks, and plains, dells, sands, and wastes,

Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,

Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun ;
And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone—
Bronze labyrinths, palace, pyramid, and crypt,
Baths, galleries, courts, temples, and terraces,
Marts, theatres, and wharfs—all filled with men !
Men everywhere ! And this performed, in turn,
When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes,
And fears, and hates, and loves which moved the crowd,—
I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
And I would speak : no thought which ever stirred
A human breast should be untold ; no passions,
No soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed with desires like mine—
To the last comfort, shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the way-side well :
And this in language as the need should be,
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
Now piled up in a grand array of words.
This done, to perfect and consummate all,
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
Mysterious notions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.
Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
And having received all love bestowed on it,
I would die : so preserving through my course
God full on me, as I was full on men :
And He would grant my prayer— “ I have gone through
“ All loveliness of life ; make more for me,
“ If not for men—or take me to thyself,
“ Eternal, infinite Love ! ”

If thou hast ne'er

Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
No king of mine.

Par.

Ah me !

Apr.

But thou art here !

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
Were blind with glo-y ; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should claim ;
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, a second time : nay, listen—
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief,—’tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will flee,
And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
Rather, grow wise in time : what though our work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way ? ’Twere little praise
Did full resources wait on our good will
At every turn. Let all be as it is.
Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree, and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework : had we means
That answered to our mind ! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon
My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the east ;
Who heeds them ? I can waive them. Serpent’s scales,
Birds’ feathers, downy furs, and fishes’ skins
Must help me ; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to : still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
“ Had I green jars of malachite, this way
“ I’d range them : where those sea-shells glisten above,
“ Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set

"The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
"Woven of mere fern and rush and blossoming flag."
Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample
Of my own land's completer workmanship,
Some trifling little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection—with what joy
Would I enshrine the relic—cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach !
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels—one word of the fiat of God—
To let my followers know what such things are !
I would adventure nobly for their sakes :
When nights were still, and still, the moaning sea,
And far away I could descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
And fling my gains before them, rich or poor—
"Friends," I would say, "I went far, far for them,
"Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
"Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
"Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,
"Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
"Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
"In haste—not pausing to reject the weeds,
"But happy plucking them at any price.
"To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
"They are scarce lovely : plait and wear them, you !
"And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed—
"The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,
"The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew !"
Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness
Would win me honour. But not these alone
Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants
And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :

The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
Than he his own heart's language. I would live
For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds : they should be mine henceforth,
Imbued with me, though free to all before ;
For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine
Should come up crusted o'er with gems : nor this
Would need a meaner spirit, than the first :
Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit—
As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow,
And comforts violets in their hermitage.
But, master, poet, who hast done all this,
How didst thou 'scape the ruin I have met ?
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey—
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair ?
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
Resolve to single out *one*, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
In beauty, to the world ; forgetting, so,
Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power ?
And, this determined, wert thou ne'er seduced
By memories, and regrets, and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell ? and did their eyes
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare once
Could tempt thee to forsake them ? Or when years

Had passed, and still their love possessed thee wholly ;
 When from without some murmur startled thee
 Of darkling mortals, famished for one ray
 Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
 Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells,
 And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
 Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
 And, to that end, select some shape once more ?
 And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
 Faint memories of the rest, that charmed so long
 Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
 As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
 A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm ?
 Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;
 Say, I was tempted sorely : say but this,
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord !

Par. Clasp me not thus,
 Aprile ! . . . That the truth should reach me thus !
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not, or I faint !

Apr. My king ! and envious thoughts could outrage
 thee !

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
 In thy success, as thou ! Let our God's praise
 Go bravely through the world at last ! What care
 Through me or thee ? I feel thy breath . . . why, tears ?
 Tears in the darkness—and from thee to me ?

Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
 To love, and, merciful God, forgive us both !
 We wake at length from weary dreams ; but both
 Have slept in fairy-land : though dark and drear
 Appears the world before us, we no less
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
 I, too, have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake :
 What penance canst devise for both of us ?

Apr. I hear thee faintly . . . the thick darkness !

Even

Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew : I speak,

And now I die. But I have seen thy face !

O, poet, think of me, and sing of me !

But to have seen thee, and to die so soon !

Par. Die not, Aprile : we must never part.

Are we not halves of one dissevered world,

Whom this strange chance unites once more ? Part ?
never !

Till thou, the lover, know ; and I, the knower,

Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear !

We will accept our gains, and use them—now !

God, he will die upon my breast ! Aprile !

Apr. To speak but once, and die ! yet by his side.

Hush ! hush !

Ha ! go you ever girt about

With phantoms, powers ? I have created such,

But these seem real as I !

Par.

Whom can you see

Through the accursed darkness ?

Apr.

Stay ; I know,

I know them : who should know them well as I ?—

White brows, lit up with glory ; poets all !

Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward !

Apr. Yes ; I see now—God is the PERFECT POET,
Who in creation acts his own conceptions.

Shall man refuse to be aught less than God ?

Man's weakness is his glory—for the strength

Which raises him to heaven and near God's self,

Came spite of it : God's strength his glory is,

For thence came with our weakness sympathy

Which brought God down to earth, a man like us.

Had you but told me this at first ! . . . Hush ! hush !

Par. Live ! for my sake, because of my great sin,
To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words .

And their deep import. Live ! 'tis not too late :
 I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
 Michal shall smile on you . . . Hear you ? Lean thus,
 And breathe my breath : I shall not lose one word
 Of all your speech—no little word, Aprile !
Apr. No, no . . . Crown me ? I am not one of you !
 'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one . . .
Par. Give me thy spirit, at least ! Let me love, too !

I have attained, and now I may depart.

6

III.—PARACELSUS.

SCENE—*A chamber in the house of Paracelsus at Basil.*
 1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out !
Fest. True, true !
 'Tis very fit that all, time, chance, and change
 I have wrought since last we sate thus, face to face,
 And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
 Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
 By your long absence, should be cast away,
 Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal
 Of our affections.
Par. Oh, omit not aught
 Which witnesses your own and Michal's love !
 I bade you not spare that ! Forget alone
 The honours and the glories, and the rest,
 You seemed disposed to tell profusely out.
Fest. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive :
 The wondrous Paracelsus—Life's dispenser,

Fate's commissary, idol of the schools,
 And Courts, shall be no more than Aurcole still—
 Still Aurcole and my friend, as when we parted
 Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
 As I best could the promptings of my spirit,
 Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
 To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
 Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
 Has won for you.

Par. Yes, yes ; and Michal's face
 Still wears that quiet and peculiar light,
 Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl ?

Fest. Just so.

Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
 Though saintly, was not sad ; for she would sing
 Alone . . . Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
 Not dreaming you are near ? Her carols dropt
 In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
 The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
 Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
 Sate conning some rare scroll from Trithem's shelves,
 Much wondering notes so simple could divert
 My mind from study. Those were happy days !
 Respect all such as sing when all alone.

Fest. Scarcely alone—her children, you may guess,
 Are wild beside her . . .

Par. Ah, those children quite
 Unsettle the pure picture in my mind :
 A girl—she was so perfect, so distinct . . .
 No change, no change ! Not but this added grace
 May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
 And Michal may become her motherhood ;
 But 'tis a change—and I detest all change,
 And most a change in aught I loved long since !
 So, Michal . . . you have said she thinks of me ?

Fest. O very proud will Michal be of you !

Imagine how we sate, long winter-nights,
 Scheming and wondering—shaping your presumed
 Adventures, or devising their reward;
 Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
 Though it was strange how, even when most secure
 In our domestic peace, a certain dim
 And fitting shade could sadden all; it seemed
 A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
 A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
 Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
 By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
 To point to one so loved and so long lost.
 And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—
 How you would laugh should I recount them now!
 I still predicted your return at last,
 With gifts beyond the greatest vaunt of all,
 All Trithheim's wondrous troop; did one of which
 Attain renown by any chance, I smiled—
 As well aware of who would prove his peer.
 Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
 As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
 In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
 Of a raw, restless boy!

Fest. Say, one whose sunrise
 Well warranted our faith in this full noon!
 Can I forget the anxious voice which said,
 "Festus, have thoughts like these e'er shaped them-
 selves

"In other brains than mine—have their possessors
 "Existed in like circumstance—were they weak
 "As I—or ever constant from the first,
 "Despising youth's allurements, and rejecting
 "As spider-films the shackles I endure?
 "Is there hope for me?"—and I answered grave
 As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,

More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
For all your glorious . . .

Par. Glorious? ay, this hair,
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine! Recall
With all the sad recallings, times when thus
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale,
As now. Most glorious, are they not?

Fest. Why . . . why . . .
Something must be subtracted from success
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,
You are changed—very changed! 'Twere losing
nothing

To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

Par. My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt:
By talking, not of me, but of yourself,
You will best gain your point.

Fest. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;
And Aurcole's glee when some stray gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
I have I that he will honour, the wild imp,
His namesake! Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
And I am Death's familiar, as you know.
I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
Warped even from his go-cart to one end—

The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
 A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick
 He left untried ; and truly well nigh wormed
 All traces of God's finger out of him.
 Then died, grown old ; and just an hour before—
 Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes—
 He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice
 Said, that in spite of thick air and closed doors
 God told him it was June ; and he knew well,
 Without such telling, hare-bells grew in June ;
 And all that kings could ever give or take
 Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
 Just so, allowing I am passing wise,
 It seems to me much worthier argument
 Why pansies,* eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize
 From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—
 Than all fools find to wonder at in me,
 Or in my fortunes : and be very sure
 I say this from no prurient restlessness—
 No self-complacency—itching to turn,
 Vary, and view its pleasure from all points,
 And, in this matter, willing other men
 Should argue and demonstrate to itself
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.
 What joy is better than the news of friends
 Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
 As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight ?
 Yes, oft than you wasted thought on me
 If you were sage, and rightly valued bliss !
 But there's no taming nor repressing hearts :
 God knows I need such !—So you heard me speak ?

Fest. Speak ? when ?

Par. When but this morning at my class ?
 There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.

* *Citrinula* (*flammula*) herba Paracelso multum familiaris.
 —DURN.

Surely you know I am engaged to fill
 The chair here?—that 'tis part of my proud fate
 To lecture to as many thick-sculled youths
 As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
 To my great reputation, and no small
 Danger of Basil's benches, long unused
 To crack beneath such honour?

Fest. I was there ;
 I mingled with the throng ; shall I avow
 I had small care to listen?—too intent
 On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
 A full corroboration of my hopes !
 What can I learn about your powers ? but they
 Know, care for nought beyond your actual state—
 Your actual value ; and yet worship you !
 Those various natures whom you sway as one !
 But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Par. Stop, o' God's name : the thing's by no means yet
 Past remedy ! Shall I read this morning's work
 --At least in substance ? Nought so worth the gaining
 As an apt scholar ! Thus then, with all due
 Precision and emphasis—(you, besides, are clearly
 Guiltless of understanding a whit more
 The subject than your stool—allowed to be
 A notable advantage) . . .

Fest. Surely, Aureole,
 You laugh at me !

Par. I laugh ? Ha, ha ! thank heaven,
 I charge you, if't be so ! for I forget
 Much—and what laughter should be like ! No less,
 However, I forego that luxury,
 Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
 True, laughter like my own must echo strange
 To thinking men ; a smile were better far—
 So make me smile ! If the exulting look
 You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long

Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles are born
 Alone of hearts like yours, or shepherds old
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
 In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.
 Never change, Festus : I say, never change !

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all !

Par. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
 —Or did your Michal's soft lips whisper words
 I have preserved ? She told me she believed
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
 I then engaged in, I should meet success),
 And yet be wretched : now, she augured false.

Fest. Thank heaven ! but you spoke strangely could
 I venture

To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
 Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find
 Henceforth less sweetness in his own, awakes
 Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not, dear friend,
 That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
 Your lot was not my own !

Par. And this, for ever !

For ever ! gull who may, they will be blind !
 They will not look nor think—'tis nothing new
 In them ; but surely he is not of them !
 My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—
 Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,
 Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye,
 Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
 A weaker vision ; would remain serene,
 Though singular, amid a gaping throng.
 I feared you, or had come, sure, long ere this,
 To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
 And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
 A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
 Past all dispute ! 'Tis vain to fret at it.

I have vowed long since that my worshippers
 Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
 All further information, good or bad :
 And little risk my reputation runs,
 Unless perchance the glance now searching me
 Be fixed much longer—for it seems to spell,
 Dimly, the characters a simpler man
 Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books
 Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
 Remained unchanged in feature—nay, his brow
 Seemed hued with triumph : every spirit then
 Praising ; *his* heart on flame the while :—a tale !
 Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?

Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
 Were raised supreme ?

Par. Good : I do well—most well !
 Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves
 With what 'tis past their power to comprehend ?
 I would not strive now : only, having nursed
 The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,
 One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
 Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
 Of shallow plausibilities alone :
 One who, in youth found wise enough to choose
 The happiness his riper years approve,
 Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
 That, ere his friend could rush upon a course
 Mad, ruinous, the converse of his own,
 His gentler spirit essayed, prejudged for him
 The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
 And warned the weak one in such tender words,
 Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—
 That oft their memory comforted that friend
 When rather it should have increased despair :
 —Having believed, I say, that this one man
 Could never lose the wisdom from the first

His portion—how should I refuse to grieve
 At even my gain if it attest his loss,
 At triumph which so signally disturbs
 Our old relation, proving me more wise ?
 Therefore, once more reminding him how well
 He prophesied, I note the single flaw
 That spoils his prophet's title : in plain words
 You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—
 I have not been successful, and yet am
 Most wretched ; there—'tis said at last ; but give
 No credit, lest you force me to concede
 That common sense yet lives upon the earth.

Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me ?

Par. You know, or (if you have been wise enough
 To cleanse your memory of such matters) knew,
 As far as words of mine could make it clear,
 That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
 Solely in the fulfilment of my plan,
 Or plot, or whatsoe'er it was ; rejoicing
 Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
 Sorrowing alone when any chance retarded
 Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days !
 Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
 I have pursued this plan with all my strength ;
 And having failed therein most signally,
 Cannot object to ruin, utter and drear
 As all-excelling would have been the prize
 Had fortune favoured me. I scarce do right
 To vex your frank good spirit, late rejoiced
 By my supposed prosperity, I know,
 And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
 Would well agree to let your error live,
 Nay, strengthen it with fables of success :
 But mine is no condition to refuse
 The transient solace of so rare a chance,
 My solitary luxury, my Festus—

Accordingly I venture to put off
 The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
 Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
 Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend !
 Not that he needs retain his aspect grave ;
 That answers not my purpose ; for 'tis like,
 Some sunny morning—Basil being drained
 Of its wise population, every corner
 Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
 Here Œcolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
 Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
 Munsterus here, Frobenius there,—all squeezed,
 And staring, and expectant,—then, I say,
 'Tis like that the poor zany of the show,
 Your friend, will choose to put his trappings off
 Before them, bid adieu to cap and bells
 And motley with a grace but seldom judged
 Expedient in such cases :—the grim smile
 That will go round ! Is it not therefore best
 To venture a rehearsal like the present
 In a small way ? Where are the signs I seek,
 The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
 Due to all quacks ? Why, this will never do !
Fest. These are foul vapours, Aureole ; nought beside !
 The effect of watching, study, weariness.
 Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
 Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
 Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
 These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
 You would not trust a trouble thus to me,
 To Michal's friend.

Par. I have said it, dearest Festus !
 The manner is ungracious, probably ;
 More may be told in broken sobs, one day,
 And scalding tears, ere long : but I thought best
 To keep that off as long as possible.

Do you wonder still?

Fest. No ; it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn, that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone,
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
Can clearly scan the little he effects :
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Par. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last ! 'Tis so with all !
First, they set down all progress as a dream,
And next, when he, whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they judge success !

Fest. Few doubtful steps ? when death retires before
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body, or subdued in mind,
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most—swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss, or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?
When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?
When . . .

Par. Rather, when and where, friend, did you
get
This notable news ?

Fest. Even from the common voice ;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute

The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Par. Folly? Why not
To magic, pray? You find a comfort doubtless
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings: once we were judged worth
The devil's tempting . . . I offend: forgive me,
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
Was fair enough as prophesyings go;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main; accordingly
I pay due homage: you guessed long ago
(The prophet!) I should fail—and I have failed.

Fest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
Your youth have not been realised as yet?
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?
Or that their innate . . .

Par. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little matters
Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail.
And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme,
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;
But there are times when patience proves at fault,
As now: this morning's strange encounter—you
Beside me once again! you, whom I guessed
Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
No friend have I among the saints at rest,
To judge by any good their prayers effect—
I knew you would have helped me!—So would He,
My strange competitor in enterprise,
Bound for the same end by another path,

ived, or ill or well, before the time,
 your disastrous journey's doubtful close—
 how goes it with Aprile? Ah, your heaven
 receives not into its beatitudes
 these martyrs for the world's sake; heaven shuts fast:
 the poor mad poet is howling by this time!
 Once you are my sole friend then, here or there,
 could not quite repress the varied feelings
 his meeting wakens; they have had their vent,
 and now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
 hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what
 my time was a gate) fronting the road
 from Einsiedeln to Lachen?

Fest.

Trifle not!

Answer me—for my sake alone. You smiled
 at now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
 of myself might blot the else so bright result;
 but if your motives have continued pure,
 your earnest will unsaltering, if you still
 remain unchanged, and if, in spite of this,
 you have experienced a defeat that proves
 your aims for ever unattainable—
 say not, you would cheerfully resign
 the contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—
 but sure you would resign it, nevertheless.
 You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even love;
 to end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat
 your very words: once satisfied that knowledge
 is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
 of yourself the first. But how is the event?
 You are defeated—and I find you here!
Par. As though “here” did not signify defeat!
 I spoke not of my little labours here—
 but of the break-down of my general aims:
 that you, aware of their extent and scope,
 should look on these sage lecturings, approved

By beardless boys, and bearded dotards, --these
As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice ! A professorship
At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained
Of life's delights to render me a match
For duties arduous as such post demands, —
Far be it from me to deny my power
To fill the petty circle lotted out
From infinite space, or justify the host
Of honours thence accruing: so, take notice,
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to come :
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth
For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see: here, drivelled the physician,
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault ;
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope
Had promised him interminable years ;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth
With some undoubted relic—a sudary
Of the Virgin ; while some other dozen knaves
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Were actively preparing 'neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor, and upset the brother ;
Brushed past the conjurer ; vowed that the first gust
Of stench from the ingredients just alight
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
Not easily laid ; and ere an hour, the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
A day—and I was posting for my life,
Placarded through the town as one whose spite

Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
 Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded
 By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
 Hard by, in the abbey—raised the prince to life ;
 To the great reputation of the seer,
 Who, confident, expected all along
 The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
 Much largess from his highness to the monks—
 And the vast solace of his loving people,
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,
 The prince was pleased no longer to defer
 The burning of some dozen heretics,
 Remanded 'till God's mercy should be shown
 Touching his sickness, as a prudent pledge
 To make it surer : last of all were joined
 Ample directions to all loyal folk
 To swell the complement, by seizing me
 Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—had endeavoured
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
 The prince's cure, and frustrate Heaven, by help
 Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
 By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
 Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
 Of further favours. This one case may serve
 To give sufficient taste of many such,
 So let them pass : those shelves support a pile
 Of patents, licenses, diplomas, titles,
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy :
 They authorise some honour : ne'ertheless,
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;
 He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,
 And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from the
 dead" . . .
 I weary you, I see ; I merely sought
 To show, there's no great wonder after all

That while I fill the class-room, and attract
 A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay ;
 And therefore need not scruple to accept
 The utmost they can offer—if I please :
 For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
 To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
 Of one like me, used up in serving her.
 Just as the mortal, whom the Gods in part
 Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
 Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think ;
 You mind the fables we have read together.

Fest. You do not think I comprehend a word :
 The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
 To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath ;
 But surely you must feel how vague and strange
 These speeches sound.

Par. Well, then : you know my hopes ;
 I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain ;
 That truth is just as far from me as ever ;
 That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow
 On that account is vain, and further effort
 To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing,
 As useless : and all this was taught to me
 By the convincing, good old-fashioned method
 Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

Fest. Dear Aureole ! you confess my fears were just ?
 God wills not . . .

Par. Now, 'tis this I most admire—
 The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
 Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear
 Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
 To see the will in question characterized
 On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot
 Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.
 I know as much of any will of God's,
 As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,

His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
 That plague him every way, and there, of course,
 Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
 My case; and for such reasons I plod on,
 Subdued, but not convinced. I know as little
 Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
 Better things in my youth. I simply know
 I am no master here, but trained and beaten
 Into the path I tread; and here I stay,
 Until some further intimation reach me,
 Like an obedient drudge; though I prefer
 To view the whole thing as a task imposed,
 Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—
 Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
 Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect;
 Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—
 Pleasures that once were pains: the iron ring
 Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
 Part of the flesh it eats. I hate no more
 A host of petty, vile delights, undreamed of
 Or spurned, before; such now supply the place
 Of my dead aims: as in the autumn woods
 Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
 Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and pale,
 Chill mushrooms, coloured like a corpse's cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well what words I seize,
 It troubles me but little that your aims,
 Vast in their dawning, and most likely grown
 Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
 Perchance I am glad; you merit greater praise;
 Because they are too glorious to be gained,
 You do not blindly cling to them and die;
 You fell, but have not sullenly refused
 To rise, because an angel worsted you
 In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer
 And though too harsh and sudden is the change

To yield content as yet—still, you pursue
 The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy-strewn.
 'Tis well: and your reward, or soon or late,
 Will come from Him whom no man serves in vain.

Par. Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive
 The very pausing from all further toil,
 Which you find heinous, would be as a seal
 To the sincerity of all my deeds.
 To be consistent I should die at once;
 I calculated on no after-life;
 Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
 Here am I with as passionate regret
 For youth, and health, and love so vainly lost,
 As if their preservation had been first
 And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact
 Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
 In rendering me the more disposed to follow
 A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—
 You will not understand—but 'twas a man
 With aims not mine, but yet pursued like mine,
 With the same fervor and no more success,
 Who perished in my sight; but summoned me
 As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
 To serve my race at once; to wait no longer
 'Till God should interfere in my behalf,
 And let the next world's knowledge dawn on this;
 But to distrust myself, put pride away,
 And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
 To men. I have not leisure to explain
 How since, a strange succession of events
 Has raised me to the station you behold,
 Wherein I seem to turn to most account
 The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive
 Some feeble glimmering token that God views
 And may approve my penance: therefore here
 You find me—doing most good or least harm:

And if folks wonder much and profit little
 'Tis not my fault ; only, I shall rejoice
 When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
 And the curtain falls ; I must hold out 'till then.

Fest. Till when, dear Aureole ?

Par. 'Till I'm fairly thrust
 From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
 And even professors fall : should that arrive,
 I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
 You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
 We sin : God's intimations rather fail
 In clearness than in energy : 'twere well
 Did they but indicate the course to take
 Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
 Be spared a further sample ! Here I stand,
 And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Fest. Remain but firm on that head ; long ere then
 All I expect will come to pass, I trust :
 The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
 Meantime, I see small chance of such event :
 They praise you here as one whose lore, divulged
 Already, eclipses all the past can show,
 But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
 Are faint anticipations of a glory
 About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
 Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
 That he depart.

Par. This favour at their hands
 I look for earlier than your view of things
 Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day
 Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
 The novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe
 Whose innate blockish dullness just perceives
 That unless miracles (as seem my works)
 Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
 To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous set

Who bitterly hate established schools, so help
 The teacher that oppugns them, and o'erthrows,
 'Till having planted his own doctrine, he
 May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;
 Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
 Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,
 But seeks, by flattery and nursing craft,
 To force my system to a premature
 Short-lived development . . . Why swell the list ?
 Each has his end to serve, and his best way
 Of serving it : remove all these, remains
 A scantling—a poor dozen at the best—
 That really come to learn for learning's sake ;
 Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
 And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture : still these few
 Redeem their fellows. Once implant the germ,
 Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Par. God grant it so !
 I would make some amends : but if I fail,
 The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
 That much is in my method and my manner,
 My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
 Which hinders of reception and result
 My doctrine : much to say, small skill to speak !
 Those old aims suffered not a looking-off,
 Though for an instant ; therefore, only when
 I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
 Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth
 So dearly purchased—only then I found
 Such teaching was an art requiring cares
 And qualities peculiar to itself ;
 That to possess was one thing—to display,
 Another. Had renown been in my thoughts,
 Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it !
 One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour to so little use :
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

Par. A task, a task ! . . .

But wherefore hide from you
The whole extent of degradation, once
Engaged in the confession ? Spite of all
My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,
Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the old task really is performed,
And my will free once more, to choose a new,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated one I quit.
In plain words, I am spoiled : my life still tends
As first it tended. I am broken and trained
To my old habits ; they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling ends
Are proved impossible : no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when
Their faint ghosts sit with me, and flatter me,
And send me back content to my dull round ?
How can I change this soul ?—this apparatus
Constructed solely for their purposes
So well adapted to their every want,
To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;
This intricate machine, whose most minute,
Least obvious motions have their charm to me
Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain,
And I alone :—how can I change my soul ?
And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
Under that soul's dominion—used to care
For its bright master's cares, and quite subdued
Its proper cravings—not to ail, nor pine,

So the soul prosper—whither drag this poor,
 Tried, patient body? God! how I essayed,
 To live like that mad poet, for a while,
 To catch Aprile's spirit, as I hoped,
 And love alone! and how I felt too warped
 And twisted and deformed! What should I do,
 Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
 Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
 To my old life—and die as I begun!
 I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake
 Of beauty only; nor can drink in balm
 From lovely objects for their loveliness;
 My nature cannot lose her first intent;
 I still must hoard, and heap, and class all truths
 With one ulterior purpose: I must know!
 Would God translate me to his throne, believe
 That I should only listen to his words
 To further my own aims! For other men,
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
 And I were happy could I quench as they
 This mad and thriveless longing, be content
 With beauty for itself alone: alas!
 I have addressed a frock of heavy mail,
 Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;
 And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
 The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more!
 Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrives
 I shall o'ertake the company, and ride
 Glittering as they!

Fest. I think I apprehend
 What you would say: if you, in truth, design
 To enter once more on the life thus left,
 Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
 Of failure is assumed.

Par. My friend, my friend,
 I speak, you listen; I explain, perhaps

You understand : there our communion ends.
 Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse ?
 When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
 We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
 The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
 And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
 My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
 My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
 Enough made known ? You ! who are you, forsooth ?
 That is the crowning operation claimed
 By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
 And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
 Secure good places—'twill be worth your while.

Fest. Are you mad, Aurcole ? What can I have said
 To call for this ? I judged from your own words.

Par. Oh, true ! A fevered wretch describes the ape
 That mocks him from the bed-foot, and you turn
 All gravely thither at once : or he recounts
 The perilous journey he has late performed,
 And you are puzzled much how that could be !
 You find me here, half stupid and half mad :
 It makes no part of my delight to search
 Into these things, much less to undergo
 Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
 That I am led to trust my state to you :
 And the event is, you combine, contrast,
 And ponder on my foolish words, as though
 They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—
 Here, loathsome with despair, and hate, and rage !
 Is there no fear, no shrinking, or no shame ?
 Will you guess nothing ? will you spare me nothing ?
 Must I go deeper ? Aye or no ?

Fest. Dear friend . .

Par. True : I am brutal—'tis a part of it ;
 The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter,
 How should you know ? Well then, you think it strange

I should profess to have failed utterly,
 And yet propose an ultimate return
 To courses void of hope : and this, because
 You know not what temptation is, nor how
 'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.
 You are to understand, that we who make
 Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end :
 There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
 Which if we manage to escape with life,
 Though touched and hurt, we straight may slacken pace
 And gather by the way-side herbs and roots
 To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm—
 No ; we are chased to life's extremest verge.
 It will be well indeed if I return,
 A harmless busy fool, to my old ways !
 I would forget hints of another fate,
 Significant enough, which silent hours
 Have lately scared me with.

Fest. Another ! and what ?

Par. After all, Festus, you say well : I stand
 A man yet—I need never humble me.
 I would have been—something, I know not what ;
 But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl :
 There are worse portions than this one of mine ;
 You say well !

Fest. Ah ! . . .

Par. And deeper degradation !
 If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
 And vanity, should become the chosen food
 Of a sunk mind ; should stifle even the wish
 To find its early aspirations true ;
 Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—
 An atmosphere of craft, and trick, and lies ;
 Should make it proud to emulate or surpass
 Base natures in the practices which woke
 Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no !

Utter damnation is reserved for Hell !
 I had immortal feelings—such shall never
 Be wholly quenched—no, no !

My friend, you wear
 A melancholy face, and truth to speak,
 There's little cheer in all this dismal work ;
 But 'twas not my desire to set abroad
 Such memories and forebodings. I foresaw
 Where they would drive ; 'twere better you detailed
 News of Lucerne or Zurich ; or I described
 Great Egypt's flaming sky, or Spain's cork-groves.

Fest. I have thought now : yes, this mood will pass
 away.

I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,
 And easily ravel out a clue to all.
 These are the trials meet for such as you,
 Nor must you hope exemption : to be mortal
 Is to be plied with trials manifold.
 Look round ! The obstacles which kept the rest
 Of men from your ambition, you have spurned ;
 Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them best,
 Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
 Avails to awe, save these delusions, bred
 From its own strength, its selfsame strength, disguised—
 Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole ! Since
 The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
 The fawn his rustling bough, mortals their cares,
 And higher natures yet their power to laugh
 At these entangling fantasies, as you
 At trammels of a weaker intellect.
 Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts !
 I know you.

Par. And I know you, dearest Festus !
 And how you love unworthily ; and how
 All admiration renders blind.

Fest. You hold

That admiration blinds?

Par. Aye, and alas!

Fest. Nought blinds you less than admiration will.
Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree; from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored:—
I say, such love is never blind; but rather
Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of:
Love broods on such: what then? When first perceived
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they disturb?
—To make those very defects an endless source
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
Made even for much proved weak? no shrinking-back
Lest, rising even as its idol sinks,
It nearly reach the sacred place, and stand
Almost a rival of that idol? Trust me,
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits,
Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,
Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause;
And least from those who hate, who most essay
By contumely and scorn to blot the light
Which will have entrance even to their hearts;
For thence will our Defender tear the veil
And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
The giant image of Perfection, grown
In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned
In the untroubled presence of its eyes!

True admiration blinds not ; nor am I
 So blind : I call your sin exceptional ;
 It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
 Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God !
 I speak of men ; to common men like me
 The weakness you confess endears you more—
 Like the far traces of decay in suns :
 I bid you have good cheer !

Par.

Præclarè ! Optimè !

Think of a quiet mountain-cloister'd priest
 Instructing Paracelsus ! yet, 'tis so.
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
 'Tis in the advance of individual minds
 That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
 Eventually to follow—as the sea
 Waits ages in its bed, 'till some one wave
 Out of the multitude aspires, extends
 The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
 Over the strip of sand which could confine
 Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,
 Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
 And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
 If all my labours, failing of aught else,
 Suffice to make such inroad, and procure
 A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;
 For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
 And a legitimate success, may be,
 I am not blind to my undoubted rank
 When classed with others : I precede my age :
 And whoso wills, is very free to mount
 These labours as a platform, whence their own
 May have a prosperous outset : but, alas !
 My followers—they are noisy as you heard,
 But for intelligence—the best of them
 So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
 And they extol, that I begin to doubt

Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones
Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

Fest. I would supply that art, then, and withhold
Its arms until you have taught their mystery.

Par. Content you, 'tis my wish ; I have recourse
To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to men.
Of course, they are for swaggering forth at once
Graced with Ulysses' club, Achilles' shield—
Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles !
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step !
A proper sight to scare the crows away !

Fest. Pity you choose not, then, some other method
Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
At length established in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these :
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners ; let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-times ;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect : sooner or later,
You shall be all-revealed.

Par. The old dull question
In a new form ; no more. Thus : I possess
Two sorts of knowledge ; one,—vast, shadowy,
Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued :
The other consists of many secrets, learned
While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
First principles which may conduct to much :
These last I offer to my followers here.
Now bid me chronicle the first of these,

My ancient study, and in effect you bid me
 Revert to the wild courses just abjured :
 I must go find them scattered through the world.
 Then, for the principles, they are so simple
 (Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
 That one time is as proper to propound them
 As any other—to-morrow at my class,
 Or half a century hence embalmed in print :
 For if mankind intend to learn at all,
 They must begin by giving faith to them,
 And acting on them ; and I do not see
 But that my lectures serve indifferent well :
 No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
 For all their novelty and rugged setting.
 I think my class will not forget the day
 I let them know the gods of Israel,
 Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
 Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,—
 Were blocks !

Fest. And that reminds me, I heard something
 About your waywardness : you burned their books,
 It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Par. And who said that ?

Fest. Some I met yesternight
 With Ecolampadius. As you know, the purpose
 Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
 His pleasure touching certain missives sent
 For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
 Apprized me that the famous teacher here
 Was my old friend.

Par. Ah, I forgot : you went . . .

Fest. From Zurich with advices for the ear
 Of Luther, now at Wittemburg—(you know,
 I make no doubt, the differences of late
 With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
 Basil and . . .

Par. I remember. Here's a case, now,
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention : pray, does Luther dream
His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine ? No, indeed :
His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was under
And heaven above them—points which chance, or time
Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny !
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
Awhile ; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come ; and next,
Reproachful wonder and inquiry : those
Who else had never stirred, are able now
To find the rest out for themselves—perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
—As never will my wise class its instructor.
And you saw Luther ?

Fest. 'Tis a wondrous soul !

Par. True : the so-heavy chain which galled mankind
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker
Of our own projects—we who long before
Had burst its trammels, but forgot the crowd,
We should have taught, still groaned beneath the load :
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may !
Whatever be my chance or my despair,
What benefits mankind must glad me too :
And men seem made, though not as I believed,
For something better than the times produce :
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
From Suabia have possessed, whom Munzer leads,
And whom the duke, the landgrave, and the elector
Will calm in blood ! Well, well—'tis not my world !

Fest. Hark !

Par. 'Tis the melancholy wind astir
Within the trees ; the embers too are grey,
Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the casement : see,
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,
Is blank and motionless : how peaceful sleep
The tree-tops all together ! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

Par. Ay ; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree
By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze :
Those happy times will come again . . .

Par. Gone ! gone !
Those pleasant times ! Does not the moaning wind
Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
And bartered sleep for them ?

Fest. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.

Par. Another world !
And why this world, this common world, to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come ? Man must be fed
With angel's food, forsooth ; and some few traces
Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
In a supreme contempt for all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks
Which constitute his essence, just as truly
As here and there a gem would constitute
The rock, their barren bed, a diamond.
But were it so—were man all mind—he gains
A station little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
Intelligence exists which casts our mind

Into immeasurable shade. No, no:
 Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity;
 These are its sign, and note, and character;
 And these I have lost!—gone, shut from me for ever,
 Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more!
 See morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
 Diluted; grey and clear without the stars;
 The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if
 Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
 His hold; and from the east, fuller and fuller
 Day, like a mighty river, is flowing in;
 But clouded, wintry, desolate, and cold:
 Yet see how that broad, prickly, star-shaped plant,
 Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,
 All thick and glistening with diamond dew.
 And you depart for Einsiedeln this day:
 And we have spent all night in talk like this!
 If you would have me better for your love,
 Revert no more to these sad themes.

Fest.

One favour,

And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved;
 Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
 My friend has changed so sorely: if this mood
 Shall pass away—if light once more arise
 Where all is darkness now—if you see fit
 To hope, and trust again, and strive again;
 You will remember—not our love alone—
 But that my faith in God's desire for man
 To trust on his support, (as I must think
 You trusted,) is obscured and dim through you;
 For you are thus, and this is no reward.
 Will you not call me to your side, dear friend?

IV.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*A House at Colmar, in Alsatia.* 1523.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. (To John Oporinus, his secretary.) Sic itur ad astra! Dear Von Visenburg

Is scandalised, and poor Torinus paralysed,
 And every honest soul that Basil holds
 Aghast ; and yet we live, and one may say,
 Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
 So true a value on his sorry carcass,
 And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
 We live ; and shall as surely start to-morrow
 For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy scathe
 To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
 With a delicate blush—no fainter tinge is born
 I' th' shut heart of a bud : pledge me, good John—
 “Basil ; a hot plague ravage it, with Pütter
 “To stop the plague !” Even so ? Do you too share
 Their panic—the reptiles ? Ha, ha ; faint through *them*,
 Desist for *them* !—while means enough exist
 To bow the stoutest braggart of the tribe
 Once more in crouching silence—means to breed
 A stupid wonder in each fool again,
 Now big with admiration at the skill
 Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes ;
 And, that done, means to brand each slavish brow
 So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
 That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it
 Out of the furrow of that hideous stamp
 Which shows the next they fawn on, what they are,
 This Basil with its magnates one and all,
 Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,

Dispatch, my trusty John ; and what remains
 To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
 Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
 This night ; we'll weather the storm at least : to-morrow
 For Nuremburg ! Now leave us ; this grave clerk
 Has divers weighty matters for my ear, (*Oporinus goes out*)
 And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Fester,
 I am rid of this arch-knave that follows me
 As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep ; at last
 May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
 How very kind, my first, best, only friend !
 Why this looks like fidelity. Embrace me :
 Not a hair silvered yet ! Right : you shall live
 Till I am worth your love ; you shall be proud,
 And I—but let time show. Did you not wonder ?
 I sent to you because our compact weighed
 Upon my conscience—(you recal the night
 At Basil, which the gods confound)—because
 Once more I aspire ! I call you to my side ;
 You come. You thought my message strange ?

Fest.

So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
 Has mingled his own fancies with the words
 Purporting to be yours.

Par.

He said no more,
 'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave
 Said fifty-fold more roughly. Well-a-day,
 'Tis true ; poor Paracelsus is exposed
 At last ; a most egregious quack he proves,
 And those he overreached must spit their hate
 On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
 Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
 Bare truth ; and at my bidding you come here
 To speed me on my enterprise, as once
 Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend ?

Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole ?

Par.

Oh, for purpose,

There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine ; at least, if not precisely mine,
The case of men cast off by those they sought
To benefit . . .

Fest.

They really cast you off?

I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
Knowing his life's worth best ; and how the judge
The matter was referred to, saw no cause
To interfere, nor you to hide your full
Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother
His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
That Basil soon was made no place for you.

Par. The affair of Liechtenfels ? the shallowest cause,
The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence !
I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
Of better things to come—would pall and pass ;
And every word comes true. Saul is among
The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased
To play off the mere marvels of my art—
Fantastic gambols leading to no end—
I got huge praise ; but one can ne'er keep down
Our foolish nature's weakness : there they flocked,
Poor devils, jostling, swearing, and perspiring,
Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !
I had a kindness for them, which was right ;
But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them : I must needs begin
To teach them, not amaze them ; “ to impart
“ The spirit which should instigate the search
“ Of truth : ” just what you bade me ! I spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,

Filed off—"the sifted chaff of the sack," I said,
 Redoubling my endeavours to secure
 The rest; when lo! one man had stayed thus long
 Only to ascertain if I supported
 This tenet of his, or that; another loved
 To hear impartially before he judged,
 And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple
 Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
 Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most:
 That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
 Did it because my bye-paths, once proved wrong
 And beaconed properly, would commend again
 The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,
 Though not their squacamish sons; the other worthy
 Discovered divers verses of St. John,
 Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
 But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
 The cholic, and what not:—*quid multa?* The end.
 Was a clear class-room, with a quiet leer
 From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
 From those in chief, who, cap in hand, installed
 The new professor scarce a year before;
 And a vast flourish about patient merit
 Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
 Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
 Of which the example was some luckless wight
 Whom my arrival had discomfited,
 But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
 To fill my chair, and so efface the stain
 Basil had long incurred. I sought no better—
 Nought but a quiet dismissal from my post;
 While from my heart I wished them better suited,
 And better served. Good night to Basil, then!
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
 The pleasure of a parting kick.

Fest. You smile :
 Despise them as they merit !

Par. If I smile,
 'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
 Flesh into stone : this courteous recompense !
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
 At gangrened blotches, eating poisonous blains,
 The ulcered barky scurf of leprosy
 Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
 —I say that, could you see as I could show,
 I would lay bare to you these human hearts
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
 O, sages have discovered we are born
 For various ends—to love, to know : has ever
 One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
 Of a nature in him formed to hate ? To hate ?
 If that be our true object which evokes
 Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate !

Fest. But I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole !

Par. What purpose were the fittest now for me ?
 Decide ! To sink beneath such ponderous shame—
 To shrink up like a crushed snail—undergo
 In silence and desist from further toil,
 And so subside into a monument
 Of one their censure blasted ; or to bow
 Cheerfully as submissively—to lower
 My old pretensions even as Basil dictates—
 To drop into the rank her wits assign me,
 And live as they prescribe, and make that use
 Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow—
 Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
 To practise the true posture for receiving
 The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance,

When they shall condescend to tutor me.
 Then one may feel resentment like a flame,
 Prompting to deck false systems in Truth's garb,
 And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
 And give them darkness for a dower, and falsehood
 For a possession : or one may mope away
 Into a shade through thinking ; or else drop
 Into a dreamless sleep, and so die off :
 But I, but I—now Festus shall divine !
 —Am merely setting out in life once more,
 Embracing my old aims ! What thinks he now ?
Fest. Your aims ? the aims ?—to know ? and where is
 found

The early trust . . .

Par. Nay, not so fast ; I say,
 The aims—not the old means. You know what made me
 A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you know
 The when and the how : hardly those means again !
 Not but they had their beauty—who should know
 Their passing beauty, if not I ? But still
 They were dreams, so let them vanish : yet in beauty,
 If that may be. Stay—thus they pass in song !

(*He sings.*)

Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls
 Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes
 From out her hair : (such balsam falls
 Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
 From summits where tired winds are fain,
 Spent with the vast and howling main,
 To treasure half their island-gain.)

And strew faint sweetness from some old
 Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud,
 Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;

And shred dim perfume, like a cloud
 From chamber long to quiet vowed,
 With moth'd and dropping arras hung,
 Mouldering the lute and books among
 Of queen, long dead, who lived there young.

Mine, every word !—and on such pile shall die
 My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
 Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,
 Or why abjure them ? So I made this rhyme
 That fitting dignity might be preserved :
 No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs
 Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
 Halts like the best of Luther's psalms !

Fest. But, Aurcole,
 Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
 Did you know all, indeed ! I have travelled far
 To learn your wishes. Be yourself again !
 For in this mood I recognize you less
 Than in the horrible despondency
 I witnessed last. You may account this, joy ;
 But rather let me gaze on that despair
 Than hear these incoherent words, and see
 This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye !

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,
 I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?
 Aprile was a poet, I make songs—
 'Tis the very augury of success I want !
 Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

Fest. Joyous ! and how ? and what remains for joy ?
 You have declared the ends (which I am sick
 Of naming) are impracticable.

Par. Aye,
 Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool !
 Listen : my plan will please you not, 'tis like ;
 But you are little versed in the world's ways.

This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—
 I will accept all helps; all I despised
 So rashly at the outset, equally
 With early impulses, late years have quenched :
 I have tried each way singly—now for both !
 All helps—no one sort shall exclude the rest.
 I seek to KNOW and to ENJOY at once,
 Not one without the other as before.
 Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause
 Once more, as first I dreamed, it shall not balk me
 Of the meanest, earthliest, sensualest delight
 That may be snatched; for every joy is gain,
 And why spurn gain, however small? My soul
 Can die then, nor be taunted "what was gained?"
 Nor, on the other hand, if pleasure meets me
 As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
 Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion
 With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
 Glorious with visions of a full success !

Pest. Success !

Par. And wherefore not? Why not prefer
 Results obtained in my best state of being,
 To those derived alone from seasons dark
 As the thoughts they bred? When I was best—my youth
 Unwasted!—seemed success not surest too?
 It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
 I am a wanderer: I remember well
 One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
 So long the city I desired to reach
 Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar
 Flashed through the circling clouds; conceive my joy !
 Too soon the vapours closed o'er it again,
 But I had seen the city, and one such glance
 No darkness could obscure: nor shall the present
 A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
 Destroy the vivid memories of the past.

I will fight the battle out !—a little tired,
 Perhaps—but still an able combatant.
 You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow ?
 But I can turn even weakness to account :
 Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
 To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
 The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
 Into a heap, and send the flame aloft !
 What should I do with age ? so sickness lends
 An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all
 We boast of : mind is nothing but disease,
 And natural health is ignorance.

Fest.

I see

But one good symptom in this notable plan :
 I feared your sudden journey had in view
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes ;
 'Tis not so : I am glad.

Par.

And if I pleased

To spit on them, to trample them, what then ?
 'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
 Provoke it : I had spared their self-conceit,
 But if they must provoke me—cannot suffer
 Forbearance on my part—if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
 Power to match power, my strength against their strength,
 And teach them their own game with their own arms—
 Why be it so, and let them take their chance !
 I am above them like a God—in vain
 To hide the fact—what idle scruples, then,
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,
 Communicate it gently to the world,
 Instead of proving my supremacy,
 Taking my natural station o'er their heads,
 Then owning all the glory was a man's,
 And in my elevation man's would be !
 But live and learn, though life's short ; learning, hard

Still, one thing I have learned—not to despair :
 And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
 I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
 Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
 The penitent empiric, who set up
 For somebody, but soon was taught his place—
 Now, but too happy to be let confess
 His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
 (*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)
 Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
 Good Pütter !

Fest. He who sneers thus, is a God !

Par. Ay, ay, laugh at me ! I am very glad
 You are not gulled by all this swaggering ; you
 Can see the root of the matter !—how I strive
 To put a good face on the overthrow
 I have experienced, and to bury and hide
 My degradation in its length and breadth ;
 How the mean motives I would make you think
 Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
 The appetites I modestly allow
 May influence me—as I am mortal still—
 Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
 My youth's desires : you are no stupid dupé ;
 You find me out ! Yes, I had sent for you
 To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus !
 Laugh—you shall laugh at me !

Fest. The past, then, Aureole,
 Proves nothing ? Is our interchange of love
 Yet to begin ? Have I to swear I mean
 No flattery in this speech or that ? For you,
 Whate'er you say, there is no degradation,
 These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind ;
 Or wherefore this disorder ? You are vexed
 As much by the intrusion of base views,
 Familiar to your adversaries, as they

Wete troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls : not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep calm though all night long the famished troops
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts :
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

Par. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend !

Fest. Nay, further ; the delights you fain would think
The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you . . .

Par. Hush ! I once despised them,
But that soon passes : we are high at first
In our demands, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value ; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse ;
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
The bitter contempt which urges us at first
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out, and a grave thoroughly earned :
I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now Enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy ;
Nor can I Know, but straight warm tears reveal
My need of linking also joy to knowledge :
So on I drive—enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly ; this will better explain—feel here !
Quick beating, is it not ?—a fire of the heart
To work off someway, this as well as any !
So, Festus sees me fairly launched ; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,

But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity;
And hope, if he command hope; and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love: and Festus quits me
To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits. I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
And then dismiss the fool; for night is come,
And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its prison; my frame
Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
Tingles for triumph! Slow and sure the morn
Shall break on my pent room, and dwindling lamp,
And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores,
When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
I must review my captured truth, sum up
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual bearings,
Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my scheme;
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
Proved worthless—which, in getting, yet had cost
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame;
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow!
I lapse back into youth, and take again
Mere hopes of bliss for proofs that bliss will be,
—My fluttering pulse, for evidence that God
Means good to me, will make my cause his own;
See! I have cast off this remorseless care
Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
And my dim chamber has become a tent,

Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
 Why do you start? I say, she listening here,
 (For yonder's Würzburg through the orchard-boughs)
 Motions as though such ardent words should find
 No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
 But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
 With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!
 Ha, ha!

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to reap
 No unreal joy from this your present course,
 But rather . . .

Par. Death! To die! I owe that much
 To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
 To live contented after such a fall—
 To thrive and fatten after such reverse!
 The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
 My time.

Fest. And you have never mused and said,
 "I had a noble purpose, and full strength
 "To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,
 "And wrongly give the first fruits of my toil
 "To objects little worthy of the gift:
 "Why linger round them still? why clench my fault?
 "Why seek for consolation in defeat—
 "In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
 "From ugliness? why seek to make the most
 "Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
 "With mighty effort to redeem the past,
 "And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
 "To hold a steadfast course 'till I arrive
 "At their fit destination, and my own?"
 You have never pondered thus?

Par. Have I, you ask?
 Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
 Would some such airy project visit me:
 But ever at the end . . . or will you hear

The same thing in a tale, a parable?
 It cannot prove more tedious; listen then!
 You and I, wandering over the world wide,
 Chance to set foot upon a desert coast:
 Just as we cry, "No human voice before
 Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"
 —Their querulous echo startles us; we turn:
 What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?
 Some characters remain, too! While we read,
 The sharp, salt wind, impatient for the last
 Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
 Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
 This is the record; and my voice, the wind's.

(*He sings.*)

Over the sea our galleys went,
 With cleaving prows in order brave,
 To a speeding wind and a bounding wave—
 A gallant armament:
 Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
 Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
 And nailed all over the gaping sides,
 Within and without, with black-bull hides,
 Seethed in fat and suppld in flame,
 To bear the playful billows' game;
 So each good ship was rude to see,
 Rude and bare to the outward view,
 But each upbore a stately tent;
 Where cedar-pales in scented row
 Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine:
 And an awning drooped the mast below,
 In fold on fold of the purple fine,
 That neither noon-tide, nor star-shine,
 Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
 Might pierce the regal tenement.
 When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad

We set the sail and plied the oar ;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the strangers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent,
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
And with light and perfume, music too :
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast !

One morn, the land appeared !—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky—
Avoid it, cried our pilot, check
The shout, restrain the longing eye !
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh ;
So we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck !
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and psalm glorious.

An hundred shapes of lucid stone !
All day we built a shrine for each—
A shrine of rock for every one—
Nor paused we till in the westering sun
We sate together on the beach

To sing, because our task was done ;
 When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !
 What laughter all the distance stirs !
 What raft comes loaded with its throngs
 Of gentle islanders ?

"The isles are just at hand," they cried ;

"Like cloudlets faint at even sleeping,

"Our temple-gates are opened wide,

"Our olive-groves thick shade ^{us} keeping

"For the lucid shapes you bring"—they cried.

Oh, then we awoke with sudden start

From our deep dream ; we knew, too late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,

To which we had flung our precious freight :

Yet we called out—"Depart !

"Our gifts, once given, must here abide :

"Our work is done ; we have no heart

"To mar our work, though vain"—we cried.

Fest. In truth ?

Par. Nay, wait : all this in tracings faint

May still be read on that deserted rock,

On rugged stones, strewn here and there, but piled

In order once ; then follows—mark what follows—

"The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung

"To their first fault, and withered in their pride !"

Fest. Come back, then, Aureole ; as you fear God,
 come !

This is foul sin ; come back : renounce the past,

Forswear the future ; look for joy no more,

But wait death's summons amid holy sights,

And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy !

Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole.

Par. No way, no way : it would not turn to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—

'Tis well for him ; but when a sinful man,

Envyng such slumber, may desire to put
 His guilt away, shall he return at once
 To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
 (Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)
 The fitting course for such; dark cells, dim lamps,
 A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm;
 No mossy pillow, blue with violets!

Fest. I see no symptom of these absolute
 And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
 This verse-making can purge you well enough,
 Without the terrible penance you describe.
 You love me still: the lusts you fear, will never
 Outrage your friend. To *Insiedeln*, once more!
 Say but the word!

Par. No, no; those lusts forbid:
 They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
 Beside you; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
 Between them and their prey; let some fool style me
 Or king or quack, it matters not, and try
 Your wisdom then, at urging their retreat!
 No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!
 If you knew how a devil sneers within me
 While you are talking now of this, now that,
 As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!

Fest. Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,
 Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!
 God made you and knows what you may become—
 Do not confide all secrets: I was born
 To hope, and you . . .

Par. To trust: you know the fruits!

Fest. Listen: I do believe, what you call trust
 Was self-reliance at the best: for, see!
 So long as God would kindly pioneer
 A path for you, and screen you from the world,
 Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
 Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext

Of your engagement in his service—yield you
 A limitless license, make you God, in fact,
 And turn your slave—you were content to say
 Most courtly praises ! What is it, at last,
 But selfishness without example ? None
 Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
 Remained implied in it ; but now you fail,
 And we, who prate about that will, are fools !
 In short, God's service is established here
 As He determines fit, and not your way,
 And this you cannot brook ! Such discontent
 Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once !
 Affirm an absolute right to have and use
 Your energies ; as though the rivers should say—
 “ We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do
 “ With feeding streamlets, lingering in the marshes,
 “ Sleeping in lazy pools ? ” Set up that plea,
 That will be bold at least !

Par.

Perhaps, perhaps !

Your only serviceable spirits are those
 The east produces :—lo, the master nods,
 And they raise terraces, spread garden-grounds
 In one night's space ; and, this done, straight begin
 Another century's sleep, to the great praise
 Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
 Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
 Wake them again. I am of different mould.
 I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him,
 And done him service past my narrow bond,
 And thus I get rewarded for my pains !
 Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding
 God's glory otherwise ; this is alone
 The sphere of its increase, as far as men
 Increase it ; why, then, look beyond this sphere ?
 We are His glory ; and if we be glorious,
 Is not the thing achieved ?

Fest. Shall one like me
 Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed
 you much,
 And you have left your first love, and retain
 Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
 Yet I still hold that you have honoured God;
 And who shall call your course without reward?
 For, wherefore this repining at defeat,
 Had triumph never inured you to high hopes?
 I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
 And what success attends me?—simply talk
 Of passion, weakness, and remorse; in short,
 Any thing but the naked truth: you choose
 This so-despised career, and rather praise
 Than take my happiness, or other men's.
 Once more, return!

Par. And soon. Oporinus
 Has pilfered half my secrets by this time:
 And we depart by day-break. I am weary,
 I know not how; not even the wine-cup soothes
 My brain to-night . . .
 Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?
 No flattery! One like you, needs not be told
 We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.
 Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts?
 Me and my cant—my petty subterfuges—
 My rhymes, and all this frothy shower of words—
 My glozing self-deceit—my outward crust
 Of lies, which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair
 Wrap the sound flesh?—so, see you flatter not!
 Why, even God flatters! but my friend, at least,
 Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
 Against all further insult, hate, and wrong
 From puny foes: my one friend's scorn shall brand me—
 No fear of sinking deeper!

Fest.

No, dear Aureole!

No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully :
 There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
 By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
 So infinitely low beside your spirit
 Mighty, majestic !—even I can see
 You own some higher law than ours which call
 Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength ;
 But I have only these, such as they are,
 To guide me ; and I blame you where they blame,
 Only so long as blaming promises
 To win peace for your soul ; the more, that sorrow
 Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
 So that I faint not under my distress.
 But wherefore should I scruple to avow
 In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
 Your fate to me is most inexplicable :
 And should you perish without recompense
 And satisfaction yet—too hastily
 I have relied on love : you may have sinned,
 But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
 As I would have God deal with fragile men
 In the end—I say that you will triumph yet !

Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus ?—'tis because
 You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours !
 Well thought on ; never let her know this last
 Dull winding-up of all : these miscreants dared
 Insult me—me she loved ; so grieve her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve her now.

Par. Michal is dead ! pray Christ we do not craze !

Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus !
 Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
 I cannot bear those eyes.

Par. Nay, really dead ?

Fest. 'Tis scarce a month . . .

Par. Stone dead !—then you have laid her
 Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,

I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
 Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
 To cheat the grave ; but a far better secret.
 Know then, you did not ill to trust your love
 To the cold earth : I have thought much of it :
 For I believe we do not wholly die.

Fest. Aureole . . .

Par. Nay, do not laugh ; there is a reason
 For what I say : I think the soul can never
 Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
 Very unfit to put so strange a thought
 In an intelligible dress of words ;
 But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Fest. But not on this account alone ? you surely,
 —Aureole, you have believed this all along ?

Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
 While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
 For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
 As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
 So it be quickly played. Away, away !
 Have your will, rabble ! while we fight the prize,
 Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,
 And leave a clear arena for the brave
 About to perish for your sport !—Behold !

V.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*A cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian, at
 Salzburg. 1541.*

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Fest. No change ! The weary night is well nigh spent,
 The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars

Grey morning glimmers feebly—yet no change !
 Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
 That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
 Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
 Like torch-flame choked in dust: while all beside
 Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
 As a strong-hold where life intrenched itself;
 But they are dead now—very blind and dead.
 He will drowse into death without a groan !

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole !
 The days are gone, are gone ! How grand thou wert :
 And now not one of those who struck thee down—
 Poor, glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
 And satisfy himself his little hand
 Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
 Another night, and yet no change ! 'Tis much
 That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
 And chafe his hands—'tis much ; but he will sure
 Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
 Once more—but only once ! His hollow cheek
 Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
 At his own state were just about to break
 From the dying man : my brain swam, my throat swelled,
 And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
 They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
 Resolved to live—to lose no faculty ;
 Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
 Until they bore him to this stifling cell :
 When straight his features fell—an hour made white
 The flushed face and relaxed the quivering limb ;
 Only the eye remained intense awhile,
 As though it recognised the tomb-like place ;
 And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here !

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—

Her bravest champion, with his well-won meed—
 Her best achievement, her sublime amends
 For countless generations, fleeting fast
 And followed by no trace;—the creature-god
 She instances when angels would dispute
 The title of her brood to rank with them—
 Angels, this is our angel!—those bright forms
 We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
 Are human, but not his: those are but men
 Whom other men press round and kneel before—
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
 Higher provision is for him you seek
 Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
 Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!

God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!
 Even as I watch beside thy tortured child,
 Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
 So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
 Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
 How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
 Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
 He might be busied by the task so much
 As to forget awhile its proper end.
 Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
 That I should range myself upon his side—
 How could he stop at every step to set
 Thy glory forth? Hadst Thou but granted him
 Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
 A halo round a star. Or, say he erred, —
 Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him
 In light and life! Thou art not made like us;
 We should be wroth in such a case; but Thou
 Forgive—so, forgive these passionate thoughts,
 Which come unsought, and will not pass away!
 I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made

Light for me in the darkness—tempering sorrow,
 So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
 It were too strange that I should doubt thy love :
 But what am I ? Thou madest him, and knowest
 How he was fashioned. I could never err
 That way : the quiet place beside thy feet,
 Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts ;
 But he—Thou shouldst have favoured him as well !

Ah ! he wakes ! Aureole, I am here—'tis Festus !
 I cast away all wishes save one wish—
 Let him but know me—only speak to me !
 He mutters—louder and louder ; any other
 Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
 What he pours forth. Dear Aurcole, do but look !
 Is it talking or singing this he utters fast ?
 Misery, that he should fix me with his eye—
 Quick talking to some other all the while !
 If he would husband this wild vehemence,
 Which frustrates its intent !—I heard, I know
 I heard my name amid those rapid words :
 O he will know me yet ! Could I divert
 This current—lead it somehow gently back
 Into the channels of the past !—His eye,
 Brighter than ever ! It must recognise !

Let me speak to him in another's name.
 I am Erasmus : I am here to pray
 That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
 The schools of Paris and of Padua send
 These questions for your learning to resolve.
 We are your students, noble master : leave
 This wretched cell ; what business have you here ?
 Our class awaits you ; come to us once more.
 (O agony ! the utmost I can do
 Touches him not ; how else arrest his ear ?)

I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him—
Better be mute, and see what God shall send.

Par. Stay, stay with me !

Fest. I will ; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old ;
Festus, you know, you must know !

Par. Festus ! Where's
Aprile, then ? Has he not chaunted softly
The melodies I heard all night ? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O, well enough ! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know !

Fest. Festus, your Festus !

Par. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know ?
I try ; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold !

Fest. My hand, see !

Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile !
We get so near—so very, very near !
'Tis an old tale : Jove strikes the Titans down
Not when they set about their mountain-piling,
But when another rock would crown their work !
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals ; though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder : all old tales !

Fest. And what are these to you ?

Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well ; most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure under foot,
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil, and drop away by flakes !
Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail !
You that hate men and all who wish their good—

Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
 One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn !
 You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,
 Who will believe 'twas you that held me back ?
 Listen : there's shame, and hissing, and contempt,
 And none but laughs who names me—none but spits
 Measureless scorn upon me—me alone,
 The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me !
 And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
 In silence and despair, by teaching them
 One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
 Had done all man could do, yet failed no less .
 Your wise plan proves abortive ! Men despair ?
 Ha, ha ! why they are hooting the empiric,
 The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
 Madly upon a work beyond his wits ;
 Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
 Could bring the matter to triumphant issue !
 So pick and choose among them all, Accursed !
 Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
 To ruin body and soul to work your ends :
 No, no ; I am the first and last, I think !

Fest. Dear fiend ; who are accursed ? who has
 done . . .

Par. What have I done ? Fiends dare ask that ? or
 you,

Brave men ? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
 By the others ! What had you to do, sage peers ?
 Here stand my rivals, truly—Arab, Jew,
 Greek, join dead hands against me : all I ask
 Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
 And even this poor privilege, it seems,
 They range themselves, prepared to disallow !
 Only observe : why fiends may learn from them !
 How they talk calmly of my throes—my fierce
 Aspirings, terrible watchings—each one claiming

Its price of blood and brain ; how they dissect
 And sneeringly disparage the few truths
 Got at a life's cost ; they too hanging the while
 About my neck, their lies misleading me,
 And their dead names brow-beating me ! Grey crew,
 Yet steeped in fresh malvolence from hell,
 Is there a reason for your hate ? My truths
 I have shaken a little the palm about each head ?
 Just think, April, all these leering dotards
 Were bent on nothing less than being crowned
 As we ! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief,
 To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect--
 Galen, of Pergamos and hell ; nay speak
 The tale, old man ! We met there face to face :
 I said the crown should fall from thee : once more
 We meet as in that ghastly vestibule :
 Look to my brow ! Have I redeemed my pledge ?

Fest. Peace, peace ; ah, see !

Par.

Oh, emptiness of fame !

Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars !
 —Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
 Could make me overlook the living world
 To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,
 But stand no longer ? What a warm light life
 After the shade ! In truth, my delicate witch,
 My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
 The juggles I had else detected. Fire
 May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours !
 The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
 But that your white limbs dazzled me : Oh, white,
 And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !
 I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
 But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
 The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
 While I remember that quaint dance ; and thus
 I am come back, not for those mummeries,

But to love you, and to kiss your little feet,
Soft as an ermine's winter coat !

Fest.

A sense

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,
As in the angry and tumultuous west
A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.
These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
The past to stand between it and its fate :
Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here !

Par. Cruel ! I seek her now—I kneel—I shriek—
I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades ;
And she is gone ; sweet human love is gone !
'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you ; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you,
Who care not for their presence—muse or sleep—
And all at once they leave you and you know them !
We are so fooled, so cheated ! Why, even now
I am not too secure against foul play :
The shadows deepen, and the walls contract—
No doubt some treachery is going on !
'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile ?
Have they left us in the lurch ? This murky, loathsome
Death-trap—this slaughter-house—is not the hall
In the golden city ! Keep by me, Aprile !
There is a hand groping amid the blackness
To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
Poet ? Hold on me for your life ; if once
They pull you !—Hold !

'Tis but a dream—no more.

I have you still—the sun comes out again ;
Let us be happy—all will yet go well !
Let us confer : is it not like, Aprile,
That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
The value of my labours ascertained,

Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
 But after glideth glassy to the sea,
 So, full content shall henceforth be my lot ?
 What think you, poet ? Louder ! Your clear voice
 Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
 How could I still remain on earth, should God
 Grant me the great approval which I seek ?
 I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
 But men would murmur, and with cause enough ;
 For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
 Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
 They would complain that comfort, shut from them,
 I drank thus unespied ; that they live on,
 Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
 For ache, and care, and doubt, and weariness,
 While I am calm ; help being vouchsafed to me,
 And hid from them !—'Twere best consider that !
 You reason well, Aprile ; but at least
 Let me know this, and die ! Is this too much ?
 I will learn this, if God so please, and die !

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please !
 We are so weak, we know our motives least
 In their confused beginning : if at first
 I sought . . . But wherefore bare my heart to thee ?
 I know thy mercy ; and already thoughts
 Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
 And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
 For love and praise would clasp me willingly
 Could I resolve to seek them : Thou art good,
 And I should be content ; yet—yet first show
 I have done wrong in daring ! Rather give
 The supernatural consciousness of strength
 That fed my youth—one only hour of that
 With thee to help—O what should bar me then !

Lost, lost ! Thus things are ordered here ! God's
creatures,
And yet he takes no pride in us !—none, none !
Truly there needs another life to come !
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it—and I hurl it back with scorn !

Well, onward though alone : small time remains,
And much to do : I must have fruit, must reap
Some profit from my toils. I'doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through : while I have laboured
It has decayed ; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast :
A sad thought—a sad fate ! How very full
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns, and all is at the best—
The sacred fire may flicker, and grow faint,
And die, for want of a wood-piler's help !
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow : well, well—
Let men catch every word—let them lose nought
Of what I say ; something may yet be done.

They are ruins ! Trust me who am one of you !
All ruins—glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane ; the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the moon :
Could I but rear them up once more—but that
May never be, so leave them ! Trust me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own ?

Trust me, they are but ruins ! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed ! Yet were I not prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is ;
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what ? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once ? you curse me ? Why men, men,
I am not formed for ~~that~~ ! Those hideous eyes
Follow me sleeping, waking, praying God,
And will not let me even die : spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
That horrible scorn ; you thought I could support it,
But now you see what silly fragile creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ, nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From hate like this : let me but totter back,
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
Eyelids, and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile ! I am very calm :
Be not deceived, there is no passion here,
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing.
I am calm : I will exterminate the race !
Enough of that : 'tis said and it shall be.
And now be merry—safe and sound am I,
Who broke through their best ranks to get at you :
And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile !

Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,
Aureole ? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left to me,
And even you forget me : take my hand—
Lean on me, thus. Do you not know me, Aureole ?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last ?
 As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise—
 But you believe I shall go through with it :
 'Tis like you, and I thank you ; thank him for me,
 Dear Michal ! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
 Flames in the sunset ; all its figures quaint
 Gay in the glancing light : you might conceive them
 A troop of yellow-vested, white-haired Jews,
 Bound for their own land where redemption dawns !

Fest. Not that blest time—not ~~our~~ youth's time, dear
 God !

Par. Ha—stay ! true, I forget—all is done since !
 And he is come to judge me : how he speaks,
 How calm, how well ! yes, it's true, all true ;
 All quackery ; all deceit ! myself can laugh
 The first at it, if you desire : but still
 You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
 So foreign to my nature—envy, and hate—
 Blind opposition—brutal prejudice—
 Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
 To humour men the way they most approved ?
 My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
 Dear Festus ! I will kneel if you require me,
 Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
 Explain its bounded nature, and avow
 My insufficiency—whate'er you will :
 I give the fight up ! let there be an end,
 A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
 I want to be forgotten even by God !
 But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
 When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
 Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
 But where such graves are thickest ; let it look
 Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
 So that the peasant at his brother's bed
 May tread upon my own and know it not ;

And we shall all be equal at the last,
 Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
 Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,
 Nor gifted : lay me thus, then say " He lived
 " Too much advanced before his brother men :
 " They kept him still in front ; 'twas for their good,
 " But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
 " That he should tell God he had never ranked
 " With men : so, here at least he is a man ! "

Fest. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear Spirit,
 Unto his breast, be sure ! and here on earth
 Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever !
 Sun ! all the heaven is glad for thee : what care
 If lower mountains light their snowy phares
 At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
 The source of day ? Men look up to the sun :
 For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
 And put aside the crowd of busy ones,
 And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
 The thinker, the explorer, the creator !
 Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
 With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well
 The winding sheet of subterraneous fire
 Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
 Huge islands up amid the simmering sea !
 Behold thy might in me ! thou hast infused
 Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as thou,
 Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
 Thou so august ! I recognise thee first ;
 I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
 And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
 My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
 And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest !

Par. Festus !

Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God !
 I am upon his side, come weal or woe !

His portion shall be mine ! He has done well !
 I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
 As he has sinned ! Reward him or I waive
 Reward ! If thou canst find no place for him,
 He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
 His slave for ever ! There are two of us !

Par. Dear Festus !

Fest. Here, dear Aurcole ! ever by you !

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on !
 Some story, any thing—only your voice.
 I shall dream else. Speak on ! ay, leaning so !

Fest. Softly the Mayze river glideth
 Close by where my love abideth ;
 Sleep's no softer : it proceeds
 On through lawns, on through meads,
 On and on, whate'er befall,
 Meandering and musical,
 Though the niggard pasture's edge
 Bears not on its shaven ledge
 Aught but weeds and waving grasses
 To view the river as it passes,
 Save here and there a scanty patch
 Of primroses, too faint to catch
 A weary bee . . .

Par. More, more ; say on !

Fest. The river pushes
 Its gentle way through strangling rushes,
 Where the glossy king-fisher
 Flutters when noon-heats are near,
 Glad the shelving banks to shun,
 Red and steaming in the sun,
 Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
 Burrows, and the speckled stoat,
 Where the quick sand-pipers flit
 In and out the marl and grit
 That seems to breed them, brown as they.

Nought disturbs the river's way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Par. My heart ! they loose my heart, those simple words ;
 Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch ;
 Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
 Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
 What were you doing when your voice broke through
 A chaos of ugly images ? You, indeed !
 Are you alone here ?

Fest. All alone : you know me ?
 This cell ?

Par. An unexceptional vault—
 Good brick and stone—the bats kept out, the rats
 Kept in—a snug nook : how should I mistake it ?

Fest. But wherefore am I here ?

Par. Ah ! well remembered :
 Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus !
 'Tis like me : here I trifle while time fleets,
 And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return !
 You are here to be instructed. I will tell
 God's message ; but I have so much to say,
 I fear to leave half out : all is confused
 No doubt ; but doubtless you will learn in time.
 He would not else have brought you here : no doubt
 I shall see clearer soon.

Fest. Tell me but this —
 You are not in despair ?

Par. I ? and for what ?

Fest. Alas, alas ! he knows not, as I feared !

Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest,
 Dear, searching face ?

Fest. How feel you, Aureole ?

Par. Well !

Well : 'tis a strange thing. I am dying, Festus,
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been :
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion, and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,
And the good boat speeds through the brightening weather ;
But is it earth or sea that heaves below ?
For the gulf rolls like a meadow, ~~over~~strewn
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore ;
And now some islet, loosened from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean ;
And now the air is full of up-torn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me. I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once : that is, those past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present,
With all its long-forgotten circumstance,
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on, and nothing more !
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more !
And this is death : I understand it all.
New being waits me ; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein ;
Which last is Death's affair ; and while I speak,
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power ; and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—

I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . But I must not tell ;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die like me !

Fest. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear !

Par. You wonder it engages me just now ?
In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me ?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain : 'Tis a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last view.
I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still it is like some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose ;
Did I not tell you something of it, Festus ?
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipped
Away from me ; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice
Complete with its old tones : that little laugh
Concluding every phrase, with up-turned eye,
As though one stooped above his head, to whom
He looked for confirmation and applause,—
Where was it gone so long, being kept so well ?
Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares ; 'tis many a year
Since I remarked it last : and this in him,
But now a ghastly wreck !)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity ?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose ; the true purpose : that is it !

How could I fail to apprehend ! You here,
 I thus ! But no more trifling ; I see all,
 I know all : my last mission shall be done
 If strength suffice. No trifling ! Stay ; this posture
 Hardly befits one thus about to speak :
 I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild ?
 You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help ; no help ;
 Not even your hand. So ! there, ~~stand~~ stand once more !
 Speak from a couch ? I never lectured thus.
 My gown—the scarlet, lined with fur ; now put
 The chain about my neck ; my signet-ring
 Is still upon my hand, I think—even so ;
 Last, my good sword ; ha, trusty Azoth, leapest
 Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time ?
 This couch shall be my throne : I bid these walls
 Be consecrate ; this wretched cell become
 A shrine ; for here God speaks to men through me !
 Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Fest. I am dumb with wonder.

Par. Listen, therefore, Festus !
 There will be time enough, but none to spare.
 I must content myself with telling only
 The most important points. You doubtless feel
 That I am happy, Festus ; very happy.

Fest. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus !
 Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin ?

Par. Ay, pardoned ! yet why pardoned ?

Fest. 'Tis God's praise
 That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Par. Have lived !
 We have to live alone to set forth well
 God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,
 And in effect need mercy, for I strove
 To do that very thing ; but, do your best -

Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
 Pardon from Him, because of praise denied—
 Who calls me to Himself to exalt Himself?
 He might laugh as I laugh !

Fest. Then all comes
 To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
 To fret themselves with what concerns them not ;
 They are no use that way : they should lie down
 Content as God has made them, nor go mad
 In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Par. No, no ; mistake me not ; let me not work
 More harm than I have done ! This is my case :
 If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
 No offering, if I render up my soul
 Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
 If I appear the better to love God
 For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—
 Be not deceived : it may be surely thus
 With me, while higher prizes still await
 The mortal persevering to the end.
 For I too have been something, though too soon
 I left the instincts of that happy time !

Fest. What happy time ? For God's sake, for man's
 sake,

What time was happy ? All I hope to know
 That answer will decide. What happy time ?

Par. When, but the time I vowed my help to man ?

Fest. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable !

Par. Yes, it was in me ; I was born for it—
 I, Paracelsus : it was mine by right.
 Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
 Might learn from its own motions that some task
 Like this awaited it about the world ;
 Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
 For fit delights to stay its longings vast ;
 And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her

To fill the creature full she dared to frame
Hungry for joy ; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from Destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs :—doubtless a strong soul
Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestic !
But this was born in me ; I was made so ;
Thus much time saved : the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me ; thus I entered on my course !
You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble ; just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road—kept my eye unruined mid
The fierce and flashing splendour—set my heart
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
Light on a darkling race ; save for that doubt,
I stood at first where all aspire at last
To stand : the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift
And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy

In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes ; where dwells enjoyment there is He !
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever !
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face ;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein ! The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of Hate,
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame ;—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride !
Then all is still : earth is a wintry clod ;
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it ; rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with
blooms,
Like chrysalids impatient for the air ;
The shining dorrs are busy ; beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks—the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe

Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain ; and God renews
His ancient rapture ! Thus He dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life : whose attributes had here and there
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
Asking to be combined—dim fragments meant
To be united in some wondrous whole—
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to make—
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
Convergent in the faculties of man.
Power ; neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used
At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear ;
Knowledge ; not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
Strengthened by love : love ; not serenely pure,
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds,
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;
Love which endures, and doubts, and is oppressed,
And cherished, suffering much, and much sustained,
A blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust :—
Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures ; and all lead up higher,
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And Man appears at last : so far the seal
Is put on life ; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up ; and from the grand result
A supplementary reflux of light,

Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth : Man, once descried, imprints for ever
His presence on all lifeless things ; the winds
Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,
A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh—
Never a senseless gust now man is born !
The herded pines commune, and have deep thoughts,
A secret they assemble to discuss,
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head : no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye :
The morn has enterprise,—deep quiet droops
With evening ; triumph takes the sun-set hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :
—And this to fill us with regard for man,
With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place ;
For these things tend still upward—progress is
The law of life—man's self is not yet Man !
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows : when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,

Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy !
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole—
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? O, long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed ; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched
stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw ;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep !
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up, and stand on his own earth,
And so begin his long triumphant march,
And date his being thence,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him !
When all the race is perfected alike
As Man, that is : all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far ;
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before,
In that eternal circle run by life :
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs ; and outgrow all
The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good ; while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round,

Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered, but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The fitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated so ;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's ; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto,
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf ; a strength
Denied that might avail him ! I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory, vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed : I gazed on power till I grew blind—
On power ; I could not take my eyes from that—
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign, and note, and character of man.
I saw no use in the past : only a scene
Of degradation, imbecility—
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase : I saw no cause why man
Should not be all-sufficient even now ;
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring ;
I would have had one day, one moment's space,

Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
To mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from man
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the Past,
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth : the Present for thee
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that Past's own shade, whence, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out : nor on thee yet
Shall burst the Future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven ;
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope, and fear, and love, shall keep thee man !
All this was hid from me : as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that,
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved ; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentrated strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair ? The power I sought for man, seemed God's !
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, One Sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise ;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there !
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error ; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution ; love preceding

Power, and with much power, always much more love ;
Love still too straitened in its present means,
And earnest for new power to set it free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere : and why ?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success ; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice, and fears, and cares, and doubts ;
Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
Their error, all tend upwardly though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who once loved rashly ; and shape forth a third,
And better tempered spirit, warned by both :
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the light-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.

Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt—
'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me.
But after, they will know me ! If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast—its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day !
You understand me ? I have said enough ?

Fest. Now die, dear Aureolæ !

Par. Festus, let my hand—
This hand, lie in your own—my own true friend !
Aprile ! Hand in hand with you, Aprile !

Fest. And this was Paracelsus !

Strafford :
AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY,

Dedicated,
IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,
TO
WILLIAM C. MACREADY, ESQ.
BY
HIS MOST GRATEFUL AND
DEVOTED FRIEND,
R. B.

April 23, 1837.

PREFACE.

I HAD for some time been engaged in a Poem of a very different nature, when induced to make the present attempt; and am not without apprehension that my eagerness to freshen a jaded mind by diverting it to the healthy natures of a grand epoch, may have operated unfavourably on the represented play, which is one of Action in Character, rather than Character in Action. To remedy this, in some degree, considerable curtailment will be necessary, and, in a few instances, the supplying details not required, I suppose, by the mere reader. While a trifling success would much gratify, failure will not wholly discourage me from another effort: experience is to come, and earnest endeavour may yet remove many disadvantages.

The portraits are, I think, faithful; and I am exceedingly fortunate in being able, in proof of this, to refer to the subtle and eloquent exposition of the characters of Eliot and Strafford, in the Lives of Eminent British Statesmen, now in the course of publication in Lardner's Cyclopædia, by a writer whom I am proud to call my friend; and whose biographies of Hampden, Pym, and Vane, will, I am sure, fitly illustrate the present year—the Second Centenary of the Trial concerning Ship-Money. My Carlisle, however, is purely imaginary: I at first sketched her singular likeness roughly in, as suggested by Matthew and the memoir-writers—but it was too artificial, and the substituted outline is exclusively from Voiture and Waller.

The Italian boat-song in the last scene is from Redi's *Bacco*, long since naturalized in the joyous and delicate version of Leigh Hunt.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(*Theatre-Royal Covent Garden, May 1, 1837.*)

CHARLES THE FIRST	Mr. DALE.
Earl of HOLLAND	HUCKEL.
Lord SAVILE	TILBURY.
Sir HENRY VANE	THOMPSON.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH,	
Earl of STRAFFORD	MACREADY.
JOHN PYM	VANDENHOFF.
JOHN HAMPTON	HARRIS.
The younger VANE	J. WEBSTER.
DENZIL HOLLIS	G. BENNET.
BENJAMIN RUDYARD	PRITCHARD.
NATHANIEL FIENNES	WORREL.
Earl of LOUDON	BENDER.
MAXWELL, <i>Usher of the Black Rod</i> ..	RANSFORD.
BALFOUR, <i>Constable of the Tower</i> ..	COLLETT.
A Puritan	WEBSTER.
Queen HENRIETTA	Miss VINCENT.
LUCY PERCY, Countess of CARLISLE ..	HELEN KAUCIT.

*Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford,
Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc. Two of Strafford's
Children.*

Stratford.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A House near Whitehall.*

HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES, and many of the Presbyterian Party: LOUDON and other Scots Commissioners: some seated, some standing beside a table strewn over with papers, etc.*

Vane. I say, if he be here . . .

Rud. And he is here !

Hol. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us ! Rudyard—Vane—remember
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate !
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still !

Vane. You say so, Hollis ? well, I must be still !
It is indeed too bitter that one man—
Any one man . . .

Rud. You are his brother, Hollis !

Hamp. Shame on you, Rudyard ! time to tell him
that,

When he forgets the Mother of us all.

Rud. Do I forget her ? . . .

Hamp. —You talk idle hate
 Against her foe : is that so strange a thing?
 Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?
A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went :
 But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook
 Within his scrip . . .

Rud. . . . Be you as still as David !

Fien. Here's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
 Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;
 Why, when the last sate, Wentworth sate with us !

Rud. Let's hope for news of them now he returns :
 —But I'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now by Heaven
 They may be cool that can, silent that can,
 Some have a gift that way : Wentworth is here—
 Here—and the King's safe closeted with him
 Ere this ! and when I think on all that's past
 Since that man left us—how his single arm
 Roll'd back the good of England, roll'd it back
 And set the woeful Past up in its place . . .

A Puritan. Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be !

Vane. . . . How that man has made firm the fickle
 King

—Hampden, I will speak out !—in aught he feared
 To venture on before ; taught Tyranny
 Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
 To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
 That strangled agony bleeds mute to death :
 —How he turns Ireland to a private stage
 For training infant villanies, new ways
 Of wringing treasure out of tears and gore,
 Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
 To try how much Man's nature can endure
 —If he dies under it, what harm ? if not . . .

Fien. Why, one more trick is added to the rest
 Worth a King's knowing—

Rud. —And what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear.

Vane. . . . How all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power . . .

Rud. Power without law . . .

Fien. Power and blood too . . .

Vane. . . . Can I be still?

Hamp. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh, Hampden, then and now! The year he
left us

The People by its Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King:
And now,—he'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause: England is—here!

Hamp. And who despairs of England?

Rud. That do I

If Wentworth is to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed for back again. I say
I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this—
And, (*turning to the rest*) all true men say after me! not
loud—

But solemnly, and as you'd say a prayer:
This Charles, who treads our England under foot,
Has just so much—it may be fear or craft—
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage; friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
Some voice to ask, "Why shrink?—am I not by?"
—A man that England loved for serving her,
Found in his heart to say, "I know where best
The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans

Upon me when you trample." Witness, you !
 But inasmuch as life is hard to take
 From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane ! 'Tis well said, Vane !

Vane. . . . Who has not so forgotten Runnymede . . .

Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane ! Go on !

Vane. . . . There are some little signs of late she knows
 The ground no place for her ! no place for her !
 When the King beckons—and beside him stands
 The same bad man once more, with the same smile,
 And the same savage gesture ! Now let England
 Make proof of us.

Voices. Strike him—the Renegade—
 Haman—Abithophel -

Hamp. (*To the Scots.*) Gentlemen of the North,
 It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
 And we pronounced the League and Covenant
 Of Scotland to be England's cause as well !
 Vane, there, sate motionless the whole night through.

Vane. Hampden . . .

Pien. Stay Vane !

Lou. Be patient, gallant Vane !

Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon ! you
 Have still a Parliament, and a brave League
 To back it ; you are free in Scotland still—
 While we are brothers (as these hands are knit
 So let our hearts be !)—hope's for England yet !
 But know you why this Wentworth comes ? to quench
 This faintest hope ? that he brings war with him ?
 Know you this Wentworth ? What he dares ?

Lou. Dear Vane,
 We know—'tis nothing new . . .

Vane. And what's new, then,
 In calling for his life ? Why Pym himself . . .
 You must have heard—ere Wentworth left our cause
 He would see Pym first ; there were many more

Strong on the People's side and friends of his,—
 Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
 But Wentworth cared not for them ; only, Pym
 He would see—Pym and he were sworn, they say,
 To live and die together—so they met
 At Greenwich : Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
 Specious enough, the devil's argument
 Lost nothing in his lips ; he'd have Pym own
 A Patriot could not do a purer thing
 Than follow in his track ; they two combined
 Could put down England. Well, Pym heard him out—
 One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all :
 " You leave us, Wentworth : while your head is on
 " I'll not leave you."

Hamp. Has Pym left Wentworth, then ?
 Has England lost him ? Will you let him speak,
 Or put your crude surmises in his mouth ?
 Away with this ! (*To the rest.*) Will you have Pym or
 Vane ?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival ! Pym shall speak !

Hamp. Meanwhile
 Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
 From Edinburgh : our last hope, as Vane says,
 Is in the stand it makes. Loudon !

Vane. (*As LOUDON is about to read*) —No—no—
 Silent I can be : not indifferent !

Hamp. Then each keep silence, praying God a space
 That he will not cast England quite away
 In this her visitation ! (*All assume a posture of reverence.*)

A Puritan. Seven years long
 The Midianite drove Israel into dens
 And caves.

Till God sent forth a mighty man,
 (*PYM enters.*)

Even Gideon ! (*All start up.*)

Pym. Wentworth's come : he has not reached

Whitehall : they've hurried up a Council there

To lose no time and find him work enough.

Where's Loudon? Your Scots' Parliament . . .

Lou.

Is firm:

We were about to read reports . . .

Pym.

The King

Has just dissolved your Parliament.

Lou. and other of the Scots.

Great God!

An oath-breaker! Stand by us England then!

Pym. The King's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth's
here;

But still some little form might be kept up.

Hol. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much to say!

Hamp. The rumour's false, then . . .

Pym.

Ay, the Court gives out

His own concerns have brought him back: I know

'Tis Charles recalls him: he's to supersede

The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltens

Whose part is played: there's talk enough, by this,—

Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now

To turn the record's last and bloody leaf

That, chronicling a Nation's great despair,

Tells they were long rebellious, and their Lord

Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,

He drew the sword on them, and reigned in peace.

Laud's laying his religion on the Scots

Was the last gentle entry:—the new page

Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down

At the sword's point."

A Puritan.

I'll do your bidding, Pym,—

England's and your's . . . one blow!

Pym.

A glorious thing—

We all say, friends, it is a glorious thing

To right that England! Heaven grows dark above,—

Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall

To say how well the English spirit comes out

Beneath it ! all have done their best, indeed,
 From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
 To the least here : and who, the least one here,
 When She is saved (and her redemption dawns
 Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)—
 Who'd give at any price his hope away
 Of being named along with the Great Men ?

One would not . . . no, one would not give that up !

Hamp. And one name shall be dearer than all names :
 When children, yet unborn, are taught that name
 After their fathers',—taught one matchless man . . .

Pym. . . . Saved England ?

What if Wentworth's should be still
 That name ?

Rud. and others. We have just said it, Pym ! It is death
 Saves her !

Fien. We said that ! There's no way beside !

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym ! They struck
 down Joab

And purged the land.

Vane. No villanous striking-down !

Rud. No—a calm vengeance : let the whole land rise
 And shout for it. No Feltons !

Pym. Rudyard, no.

England rejects all Feltons ; most of all
 Since Wentworth . . .

Hampden, say the praise again
 That England will award me . . . But I'll think
 You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
 —Spite of the past,—Wentworth rejoins you, friends !

Rud. and others. Wentworth ! apostate . . .

Vane. Wentworth, double-dyed

A traitor ! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

Pym. . . . Who says

Vane never knew that Wentworth—loved that Went-
 worth—

Felt glad to stroll with him, arm lock'd in arm,
 Along the streets to see the People pass
 And read in every island-countenance
 Fresh argument for God against the King,—
 Never sate down . . . say, in the very house
 Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts
 (You've joined us, Hampden, Hollis, you as well,)
 And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

Vane. . . . To frame, we know it Pym, the choicest
 clause

In the Petition of Rights: which Wentworth framed
 A month before he took at the King's hand
 His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
 Denounced . . .

Rud. And infamy along with it!

A Puritan. For whoso putteth his right-hand to the
 plough
 And turneth back . . .

Pym. Never more, never more
 Walked we together! Most alone I went;
 I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—
 But I shall never quite forget that friend!
 (After a pause) And yet it could not but be real in him!
 You Vane, you Rudyard, have no right to trust
 That Wentworth . . . O will no one hope with me?
 —Vane—think you Wentworth will shed English blood
 Like water?

A Puritan. Ireland is Aceldama!

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
 To please the King, now that he knows the King?
 The People or the King? The People, Hampden,
 Or the King . . . and that King—Charles! Will no one
 hope?

Hamp. Pym, we do know you: you'll not set your heart
 On any baseless thing: but say one deed
 Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . . (Shouting without.)

Vane. Pym, he comes
And they shout for him!—Wentworth!—he's with
Charles—

The king embracing him—now—as we speak . . .

And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself!—
Now—while you tell us here how changed he is—
Do you hear, Pym? The People shout for him!

Pien. We'll not go back, now! Hollis has no brother—
Vane has no father . . .

Vane. Pym should have no friend!
Stand you firm, Pym! Eliot's gone, Wentworth's lost,
We have but you, and and you very firm!
Truth is eternal, come below what will,
But . . . I know not . . . if you should fail . . . O God!
(O God!

Pym (apart and in thought). And yet if 'tis a dream,
no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after—that he led their cause
Calm to success and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our soul, and close content
That violence, which something mars even Right
That sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!

Paul. Proceed to England's work: who reads the list?

A Voice. "Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern ones
Where Wentworth's influence" . . . (*Renewed shouting.*)

Vane (passionately striking the table). I, in England's
name

Declare her work, this way, at end! till now—
Up to this moment—peaceful strife was well!
We English had free leave to think: till now,

We had a shadow of a Parliament :

'Twas well : but all is changed : they threaten us :

They'll try brute-force for law—here—in our land !

Many Voices. True hearts with Vane ! The old true hearts with Vane !

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no act Serves England !

Voices. Vane for England !

Pym (as he passes slowly before them). Pym should be Something to England ! I seek Wentworth, friends !

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

Enter CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

Went. And the King ?

Car. Dear Wentworth, lean on me ; sit then ; I'll tell you all ; this horrible fatigue Will kill you.

Went. No ; or—Lucy, just your arm ; I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him : After that, rest. The King ?

Car. Confides in you.

Went. Why ? why now ?

—They have kind throats, the people ! Shout for me . . . they !—poor fellows.

Car. Did they shout ?
—We took all measures to keep off the crowd—
Did they shout for you ?

Went. Wherefore should they not ?
Does the King take such measures for himself ?
Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontent,
You say ?

Car. I said but few dared carp at you . . .

Went. At me ? at us, Carlisle ! The King and I !
C Of He's surely not disposed to let me bear
Of Away the fame from him of these late deeds

In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill?

He trusts me then?

Car. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I know
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Went. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us,—then the King will grant me . . . Lady,
Will the King leave these—leave all these—and say
“Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!”

Car. But you said
You would be calm.

Went. Lucy, and I am calm!
How else shall I do all I come to do,
—Broken, as you may see, body and mind—
How shall I serve the King? time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half . . . His footstep! No,
—But now, before I meet him,—(I am calm)—
Why does the King distrust me?

Car. He does not
Distrust you.

Went. Lucy, you can help me . . . you
Have even seemed to care for me: help me!
Is it the Queen?

Car. No—not the Queen—the party
That poisons the Queen’s ear,—Savile—and Holland . . .

Went. I know—I know—and Vane, too, he’s one
too?

Go on—and he’s made Secretary— Well?
—Or leave them out and go straight to the charge!
The charge!

Car. O there’s no charge—no precise charge—
Only they sneer, make light of . . . one may say
Nibble at what you do.

Went. I know: but Lucy,
Go on, dear Lucy— Oh I need you so!

I reckoned on you from the first !—Go on !
 . . . Was sure could I once see this gentle girl
 When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
 To help her weary friend. . . .

Car. You thought of me,
 Dear Wentworth ?

Went. . . . But go on ! The People here .

Car. They do not think your Irish Government
 Of that surpassing value . . .

Went. The one thing
 Of value ! The one service that the crown
 May count on ! All that keeps these very things
 In power, to vex me . . . not that they do vex me,
 Only it might vex some to hear that service
 Decried—the sole support that's left the King !

Car. So the Archbishop says.

Went. Ah ? well, perhaps
 The only hand held up in its defence
 May be old Laud's !

These Hollands, then, these Savilès
 Nibble ? They nibble ?—that's the very word !

Car. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says, . . .

Went. Enough ! 'tis too unworthy,—I am not
 So patient as I thought !

What's Pym about ?

Car. Pym ?

Went. Pym and the People.

Car. Oh, the Faction !
 Extinct—of no account—there 'll never be
 Another Parliament.

Went. Tell Savile that !
 You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here
 Never forget !) that in my earliest life
 I was not . . . not what I am now ! The King
 May take my word on points concerning Pym
 Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,

Girl, they shall ruin their vile selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands—I'll not be their tool—
Pym would receive me yet!

—But then the King!—

I'll bear it all. The King—where is he, Girl?

Car. He is apprised that you are here: be calm!

Went. And why not meet me now? Ere now? You
said

He sent for me . . . he longed for me!

Car. . . . Because . . .

He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now

About this Scots affair . . .

Went. . . . A Council sits?

They have not taken a decided course

Without me in this matter?

Car. . . . I should say . . .

Went. The War? They cannot have agreed to that?

Not the Scots' War?—without consulting me—

Me—that am here to show how rash it is,

How easy to dispense with?

—Ah, you too

Against me! well,—the King may find me here.

(*As CARLISLE is going.*)—Forget it, Lucy: cares make
peevish: mine

Weight me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.

Car. For life or death I am your own, dear friend!

(*Aside.*) I could not tell him . . . sick too! . . . And
the King

Shall love him! Wentworth here, who can withstand

His look?—And he did really think of me?

O 'twas well done to spare him all the pain! (*Exit.*)

Went. Heartless! . . . but all are heartless here.

Go now,

Forsake the people!

—I did not forsake

The People: they shall know it . . . when the King

Will trust me !—who trusts all beside at once
 While I . . . have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
 And am not trusted : have but saved the Throne :
 Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
 And am not trusted !

But he'll see me now :
 And Weston's dead—and the Queen's English now—
 More English—oh, one earnest word will brush
 These reptiles from . . . (*footsteps within.*)

The step I know so well !
 'Tis Charles !—But now—to tell him . . . no—to ask him
 What's in me to distrust :—or, best begin
 By proving that this frightful Scots affair
 Is just what I foretold : I'll say, "my liege" . . .
 And I feel sick, now ! and the time is come—
 And one false step no way to be repaired . . .
 You were revenged, Pym, could you look on me !

(*PYM enters.*)

Went. I little thought of you just then.

Pym.

No? I

Think always of you, Wentworth.

Went. (Aside.)

The old voice !

I wait the King, sir.

Pym.

True—you look so pale :

A council sits within ; when that breaks up

He'll see you.

Went.

Sir, I thank you.

Pym.

Oh, thank Laud !

You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs

The case is desperate : he'll not be long

To-day : He only means to prove, to-day,

We English all are mad to have a hand

In butchering the Scots for serving God

After their fathers' fashion : only that.

Went. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them !

(*Aside.*) Does *he* enjoy their confidence? (*To P.*) 'Tis kind

To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came? no need—you shall have all
The credit, trust me.

Went. Have they, Pym . . . not dared—
They have not dared . . . that is—I know you not—
I'arewell—the times are changed.

Pym. —Since we two met
At Greenwich? Yes—poor patriots though we be,
You shall see something here, some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!
Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance-sake;
Just to decide a question; have you, now,
Really felt well since you forsook us?

Went. Pym—
You're insolent!

Pym. Oh, you misapprehend!
Don't think I mean the advantage is with me:
I was about to say that, for my part,
I've never quite held up my head since then,—
Been quite myself since then: for first, you see,
I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.

Went. By Heaven . . .

Pym. Forgive me: Savile, Vane, and Holland
Eschew plain-speaking: 'tis a trick I have.

Went. How, when, where,—Savile, Vane and Holland
speak,—

Plainly or otherwise,—would have my scorn,
My perfect scorn, Sir . . .

Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts

Claim somewhat ?

Went. Keep your thoughts ! believe the King
Mistrusts me for their speaking, all these Vanes
And Saviles ! make your mind up, all of you,
That I am discontented with the King !

Pym. Why, you may be—I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.

Went. Like me ?

Pym. I care not much
For titles : our friend Eliot died no Lord,
Hampden's no Lord, and Savile is a Lord :
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
I can't think, therefore, Charles did well to laugh
When you twice prayed so humbly for an Earldom.

Went. Pym . . .

Pym. And your letters were the movingest !
Console yourself : I've borne him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be opprest by Laud—
And moving in their way : he'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.

Went. False ! a lie, Sir !

. . . Who told you, Pym ?
—But then

The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad
When it was shewn me why ;—I first refused it !
. . . Pym, you were once my friend—don't speak to me !

Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this !

Went. Leave me !

Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you ?

Went. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this ! . . .

Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach . . . now sad with doubt and fear,
Because I hope in you—Wentworth—in you

Who never mean to ruin England—you
 Who shake, with God's great help, this frightful dream
 Away, now, in this Palace, where it crept
 Upon you first, and are yourself—your good
 And noble self—our Leader—our dear Chief—
 Hampden's own friend—

This is the proudest day !

Come Wentworth ! Do not even see the King !
 The rough old room will seem itself again !
 We'll both go in together—you've not seen
 Hampden so long—come—and there's Vane—I know
 You'll love young Vane ! This is the proudest day !
 (*The KING enters. WENTWORTH lets fall PYM's hand.*)

Cha. Arrived, my Lord ?—This Gentleman, we know,
 Was your old friend :

(*To PYM*) The Scots shall be informed
 What we determine for their happiness. (*Exit PYM.*)
 You have made haste, my Lord.

Went. Sire . . . I am come . . .

Cha. To aid us with your counsel : this Scots' League
 And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
 That they intrigue with France : the Faction, too . . .

Went. (*Kneels.*) Sire, trust me ! but for this once,
 trust me, Sire !

Cha. What can you mean ?

Went. That you should trust me ! now !
 Oh—not for my sake ! but 'tis sad, so sad
 That for distrusting me, you suffer—you
 Whom I would die to serve : Sire, do you think
 That I would die to serve you ?

Cha. But rise, Wentworth !

Went. What shall convince you ? What does Savile do
 To . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart—one's
 heart—

And show it, how sincere a thing it is !

Cha. Have I not trusted you ?

Went. Say aught but that !
 It is my comfort, mark you : all will be
 So different when you trust me . . . as you shall !
 It has not been your fault,—I was away,
 Maligned—away—and how were you to know ?
 I am here, now—you mean to trust me, now—
 All will go on so well !

Cha. Be sure I will—
 I've heard that I should trust you : as you came
 Even Carlisle was telling me . . .

Went. No,—hear nothing—
 Be told nothing about me ! you're not told
 Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you !

Cha. You love me . . . only rise !

Went. I can speak now.
 I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I
 Can save you ; only I. Sire, what is done !

Cha. Since Laud's assured . . . the minutes are
 within . . .

Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

Went. That is, he'll have a war : what's done is done !

Cha. They have intrigued with France ; that's clear to
 Laud.

Went. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
 The war's expence ?

Cha. He'd not decide on that
 Until you joined us.

Went. Most considerate !
 You're certain they intrigue with France, these Scots ?
 (*Aside.*) The People would be with us !

Cha. Very sure.

Went. (The People for us . . . were the People for us !)
 Sire, a great thought comes to reward your trust !
 Summon a parliament ! in Ireland first,
 And then in England.

Cha. Madness !

Went. (*Aside.*) That puts off
The war—gives time to learn their grievances—
To talk with Pym—(*To CHARLES*). I know the faction, as
They style it, . . .

Cha. . . . Tutors Scotland!

Went. All their plans

Suppose no parliament : in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs
Of Scotland's treason ; bid them help you, then !
Even Pym will not refuse !

Cha. You would begin

With Ireland ?

Went. Take no care for that : that's sure

To prosper.

Cha. You shall rule me : you were best
Return at once : but take this ere you go ! (*Giving a paper.*)
Now, do I trust you ? You're an Earl : my friend
Of friends : yes, Strafford, while . . . You hear me not !

Went. Say it all o'er again—but once again—
The first was for the music—once again !

Cha. Strafford, my brave friend, there were wild reports—
Vain rumours . . . Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight : why gaze
So earnestly ?

Went. I am grown young again,
And foolish ! . . . what was it we spoke of ?

Cha. Ireland,

The Parliament,—

Went. I may go when I will ?

—Now ?

Cha. Are you tired so soon of me ?

Went. My King . . .

But you will not so very much dislike

A Parliament ? I'd serve you any way !

Cha. You said just now this was the only way.

Went. Sire, I will serve you !

Cha. Strafford, spare yourself—
You are so sick, they tell me, . . .

Went. 'Tis my soul
That's well and happy, now !

Went. This Parliament—
We'll summon it, the English one—I'll care
For every thing : You shall not need them much !

Cha. If they prove restive . . .

Went. I shall be with you !

Cha. Ere they assemble ?

Went. I will come, or else

Deposit this infirm humanity
I' the dust ! My whole heart stays with you, my King !
(*As STRAFFORD goes out, the QUEEN enters.*)

Cha. That man must love me !

Queen. Is it over then ?

Why he looks yellower than ever ! well,
At least we shall not hear eternally
Of his vast services : he's paid at last.

Cha. Not done with : he engages to surpass
All yet performed in Ireland.

Queen. I had thought
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.
The War, Charles—will he raise supplies enough ?

Cha. We've hit on an expedient ; he . . . that is,
I have advised . . . we have decided on
The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.

Queen. O truly ! You agree to that ? Is this
The first fruit of his counsel ? But I guessed
As much.

Cha. This is too idle, Henrietta !
I should know best : He will strain every nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .

Queen. Notice
How sure he is of a long term of favours !
He'll see the next, and the next after that ;

No end to Parliaments !

Cha. Well, it is done :
He talks it smoothly, doubtless : if, indeed,
The Commons here . . .

Queen. Here ! you will summon them
Here ? Would I were in France again to see
A King !

Cha. But Henrietta . . .

Queen. O the Scots
Do well to spurn your rule !

Cha. But, listen, Sweet . . .

Queen. Let Strafford listen—you confide in him !

Cha. I do not, Love—I do not so confide . . .

The Parliament shall never trouble us

. . . Nay, hear me ! I have schemes—such schemes—
we'll buy

The leaders off : without that, Strafford's counsel

I had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it

To have excuse for breaking it—for ever—

And whose will then the blame be ? See you not ?

Come, Dearest !—look ! the little fairy, now,

That cannot reach my shoulder ! Dearest, come !

(*Exeunt.*)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

The same Party enters confusedly; among the first, the younger VANE and RUDYARD.

Rud. Twelve subsidies !

Vane. O Rudyard, do not laugh
At least !

Rud. True : Strafford called the Parliament—
'Tis he should laugh !

A Puritan (entering). —Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.

Fien. (entering). —A stinging one,
If that's the Parliament : twelve subsidies !
A stinging one ! but, brother, where's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg—the Scots' War ?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

Fien. Shall be ? It chips the shell, man ; peeps
abroad :

Twelve subsidies !—

Why, how now Vane ?

Rud. Hush, Fiennes !

Fien. Ah ? . . . but he was not more a dupe than I,
Or you, or any here the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look up, dear Vane !
We all believed that Strafford meant us well
In summoning the Parliament . . .

(HAMPDEN enters.)

Vane (starting up). Now, Hampden,
Clear me ! I would have leave to sleep again !
I'd look the People in the face again !

Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
Better of Strafford ! Fool !

Hamp. You'll grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Vane !

Rud. Ay, Fiennes,
Strafford revived our Parliaments : before,
War was but talked of ; there's an army, now :
Still, we've a Parliament. Poor Ireland bears
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death !)
Why . . . speak of it in Parliament ! and, lo,
'Tis spoken !—and console yourselves.

Fien. The jest !
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on ourselves
A sorer burthen than the King dares lay !

Rud. Mark now : we meet at length : complaints
pour in

From every county : all the land cries out
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber : we lend
An ear : "ay, lend them all the ears you have,"
Puts in the King ; "my subjects, as you find,
"Are fretful, and conceive great things of you :
"Just listen to them, friends : you'll sanction me
"The measures they most wince at, make them yours
"Instead of mine, I know : and, to begin,
"They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight
"Twelve subsidies !"

Fien. and others. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies !

Hol. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland . . . what has he to do with that ?
How could he speak his mind ? He left before
The Parliament assembled : Rudyard, friends,
He could not speak his mind ! and Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .

Rud. Would I were sure we know ourselves !
What is for good, what, bad—who friend, who foe !

Hol. Do you count Parliaments no gain ?

Rud. A gain ?

While the King's creatures overbalance us ?

—There's going on, beside, among ourselves

A quiet, slow, but most effectual course

Of buying over, sapping, . . .

A Puritan. . . . Leavening

The lump till all is leaven.

A Voice. Glasville's gone.

Rud. I'll put a case ; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House
Would have consented to that wretched offer
To let us buy off Ship-money ?

Hol. Most like,

If . . . say six subsidies, will buy it off,

The House . . .

Rud. . . . Will grant them ! Hampden, do
you hear ?

Oh, I congratulate you that the King

Has gained his point at last . . . our own assent

To that detested tax ! all's over then !

There's no more taking refuge in this room

And saying, " Let the King do what he will,

" We, England, are no party to our shame,—

" Our day will come ! " Congratulate with me !

(*PYM enters.*)

Vdne. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, 'tis like—

But we'll not have our Parliaments like those

In Ireland, Pym !

Rud. Let him stand forth, that Strafford !

One doubtful act hides far too many sins ;

It can be stretched no more—and, to my mind,

Begins to drop from those it covers.

Other Voices. Pym,
Let him avow himself! No fitter time!
We wait thus long for you!

Rud. Perhaps, too long!
Since nothing but the madness of the Court
In thus unmasking its designs at once
Had saved us from betraying England. Stay—
This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote
Our list of grievances too black by far
To suffer talk of subsidies: or best—
That Ship-money's disposed of long ago
By England; any vote that's broad enough:
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
Support his Parliament!

Vane. And vote as well
No war's to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?
We'll vote, no War! No part nor lot in it
For England!

Many Voices. Vote, no War! Stop the new levies!
No Bishop's War! At once! When next we meet!

Pym. Much more when next we meet!

—Friends, which of you
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt
Has fallen the most away in soul from me?

Vane. I sate apart, even now, under God's eye,
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy!

Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry! Take my hand
And say you pardon me for all the pain
Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.

Many Voices. 'Tis sure?

Pym. Most sure—for Charles dissolves the Parliament
While I speak here! . . .

(Great emotion in the assembly.)

. . . And I must speak, friends, now !
 Strafford is ours ! The King detects the change,
 Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
 His ancient path : no Parliament for us—
 No Strafford for the King !

Come all of you
 To bid the King farewell, predict success
 To his Scots expedition, and receive
 Strafford, our comrade now ! The next will be
 Indeed a Parliament !

Vane. Forgiveness, Pym!

Voices. This looks like truth—Strafford can have, indeed,

No choice!

Pym. Friends, follow me ! he's with the King :
Come Hampden, and come Rudyard, and come Vane—
This is no sullen day for England, Vane !
Strafford shall tell you !

Voices. To Whitehall then ! Come !
(*Exeunt omnes.*)

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

CHARLES seated, STRAFFORD standing beside a table covered with maps, etc.

Cha. Strafford . . .

Straf. Is it a dream? my papers, here—
Thus—as I left them—all the plans you found
So happy—(look! The track you pressed my hand
For pointing out!)—and in this very room
Over these very plans, you tell me, Sirc,
With the same face, too,—tell me just one thing
That ruins them! How's this? what may this mean?
Sire, who has done this?

Cha. Strafford, none but I !

You bade me put the rest away—indeed
You are alone !

Straf. Alone—and like to be !
No fear, when some unworthy scheme's grown ripe,
Of those who hatched it leaving you to loose
The mischief on the world ! Laud hatches war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me—
And I'm alone !

Cha. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.

Straf. My liege,
Is this the way ? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 'twere best to hurry o'er
The loathsome business—not to be whole months
At slaughter—one blow—only one—then, peace—
Save for the dreams ! I said, to please you both
I'd lead an Irish Army to the West,
While in the South the English . . . but you look
As though you had not told me fifty times
'Twas a brave plan ! My Army is all raised—
I am prepared to join it . . .

Cha. Hear me, Strafford !

Straf. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole
design
Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
This English Army : why ? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened : and, meanwhile, who answers for
The Irish Parliament ? or Army, either ?
Is this my plan ? I say, is this my plan ?

Cha. You are disrespectful, Sir !

• *Straf.* Do not believe—
My liege, do not believe it ! I am yours—
Yours ever—'tis too late to think about—
To the death, yours ! Elsewhere, this untoward step

Shall pass for mine—the world shall think it mine—
 But, here ! But, here ! I am so seldom here !
 Seldom with you, my King ! I—soon to rush
 Alone—upon a Giant—in the dark !

Cha. My Strafford !

Straf. (*Sits himself at the table ; examines paper.
 awhile ; then, breaking off*)

. . . "Seize the passes of the Tyne" . . .

But don't you see—see all I say is true ?
 My plan was sure to prosper,—so, no cause
 To ask the Parliament for help ; whereas
 We need them—frightfully . . .

Cha. Need this Parliament ?

Straf. —Now, for God's sake, mind—not one error
 more !

We can afford no error—we draw, now,
 Upon our last resource—this Parliament
 Must help us !

Cha. I've undone you, Strafford !

Straf. Nay—

Nay—don't despond—Sire—'tis not come to that !
 I have not hurt you ? Sire—what have I said
 To hurt you ? I'll unsay it ! Don't despond !
 Sire, do you turn from me ?

Cha. My friend of friends !

Straf. (*After a pause*). We'll make a shift ! Leave me
 the Parliament !

They help us ne'er so little but I'll make
 A vast deal out of it. We'll speak them fair :
 They're sitting : that's one great thing : that half gives
 Their sanction to us : that's much : don't despond !
 Why, let them keep their money, at the worst !
 The reputation of the People's help
 Is all we want : we'll make shift yet !

Cha. Dear Strafford !

Straf. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small

They offer, we'll accept it : any sum—
For the look of it : the least grant tells the Scots
The Parliament is ours . . . their staunch ally
Is ours : that told, there's scarce a blow to strike !
What will the grant be ? What does Glanville think ?

Cha. Alas . . .

Straf. My liege ?

Cha. Strafford . . .

Straf. But answer me !

Have they . . . O surely not refused us all ?
All the twelve subsidies ? We never looked
For all of them ! How many do they give ?

Cha. You have not heard . . .

Straf. (What has he done ?)—Heard what ?
But speak at once, Sir—this grows terrible !

(The King continuing silent.)

You have dissolved them !—I'll not leave this man.

Cha. 'Twas Vane—his ill-judged vehemence that . . .

Straf. Vane ?

Cha. He told them, as they were about to vote
The half, that nothing short of all the twelve
Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Straf. Vane !

Vane ! and you promised me that very Vane . . .

O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me
The one last hope—I that despair, *my* hope—
That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
All bitterness one day, be proud again
And young again, care for the sunshine too,
And never think of Eliot any more,—
God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart—
And find Vane there !

*(Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with
a forced calmness.)*

Northumberland is sick :

Well then, I take the Army : Wilmot leads
 The Horse, and he with Conway must secure
 The passes of the Tyne : Ormond supplies
 My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City :
 If they refuse a loan . . . debase the coin
 And seize the bullion ! we've no other choice.
 Herbert . . .

(*Flinging down the paper.*) And this while I am here !
 with you !

And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane ! I go,—
 And, I once gone, they'll close around you, Sire,
 When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
 To ruin me—and you along with me !
 Do you see that ? And you along with me !
 —Sire, you'll not ever listen to these men,
 And I away, fighting your battle ? Sire,
 If they—if She—charge me—no matter what—
 You say, “ At any time when he returns
 “ His head is mine.” Don't stop me there ! You know
 My head is yours . . . only, don't stop me there !

Cha. Too shameful, Strafford ! You advised the war,
 And . . .

Straf. I ! I ! that was never spoken with
 Till it was entered on ! That loathe the war !
 That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .
 Do you know, Charles, I think, within my heart,
 That you would say I did advise the war ;
 And if, thro' your own weakness, falsehood, Charles,
 These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back . . .
 You will not step between the raging People
 And me, to say . . .

I knew you ! from the first
 I knew you ! Never was so cold a heart !
 Remember that I said it—that I never
 Believed you for a moment !

—And, you loved . . . ?

You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
 Because I could not share your whisperings
 With Vane? With Savile? But your hideous heart—
 I had your heart to see, Charles! Oh, to have
 A heart of stone—of smooth, cold, frightful stone!
 Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots
 Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym—
 Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think
 I'll leave them in the dark about it all?
 They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not . . .

(*Enter PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, &c.*)

(*Dropping on his knee.*) Thus favoured with your
 gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against
 Your servant, utterly and ever yours?
 (*To the rest*) So, Gentlemen, the King's not even left
 The privilege of bidding me farewell
 Who haste to save the People—that you style
 Your People—from the mercies of the Scots
 And France their friend?

(*To CHARLES*) Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed
 Upon you, Sire!

(*To the rest*) Your pleasure, Gentlemen?

Hamp. The King dissolved us—'tis the King we seek
 And not Lord Strafford.

Straf. . . . Strafford, guilty too
 Of counselling the measure: (*To CHARLES*) (Hush . . .
 you know . . .

You have forgotten . . . Sire, I counselled it!)
 —(*Aloud*) A heinous matter, truly! But the King
 Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
 Which now, perchance . . . (Sire, tell them so!) . . .
 he blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge—
 I shall be with the Scots—you understand?—
 Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty^{*}
 Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .
(Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: VANE and others gazing at them: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.)

Hamp. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!

Vane and others. Dear Pym! Come out of this unworthy place

To our old room again! Come, dearest Pym!

(STRAFFORD just about to follow the King, looks back.)

Pym. *(To STRAFFORD)* Keep tryst! the old appointment's made anew:

Forget not we shall meet again!

Straf. Be it so!

And if an Army follows me?

Vane. His friends

Will entertain your Army!

Pym. I'll not say

You have misreckoned, Strafford: time will . . .

Perish.

Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt—

Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve

Of one whose prowess is to do the feat!

What share have I in it? Shall I affect

To see no dismal sign above your head

When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?

Strafford is doomed!—Touch him no one of you!

(Exit PYM, HAMPDEN, etc.)

Straf. Pym we shall meet again!

(Enter CARLISLE.)

You here, girl?

Car.

Hush—

I know it all—hush, dearest Strafford !

Straf.

Ah ?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy !
All Knights begin their enterprise, you know,
Under the best of auspices ; 'tis morn—
The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth—
(He's always very young)—the trumpets sound—
Cups pledge him, and . . . and . . . the King blesses
him—

You need not turn a page of the Romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate ! Indeed
We've the fair Lady here ; but she apart,—
A poor man, never having handled lance,
And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not the Giant's friends : well—well—
Let us go forth !

Car.

Go forth ?

Straf.

What matters it ?

We shall die gloriously—as the book says.

Car. To Scotland ? not to Scotland ?

Straf.

Am I sick

Like your good brother, brave Northumberland ?
Beside the walls seem falling on me !

Car.

Strafford,

The wind that saps these walls can undermine
Your camp in Scotland, too ! Whence creeps the wind ?
Have you no eyes except for Pym ? Look here !
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
In your contempt ; you'll vanquish Pym ? Friend, Vane
Can vanquish you ! And Vane you think to fly ?—
Rush on the Scots ! Do nobly ! Vane's slight sneer
Shall test success—adjust the praise—suggest
The faint result : Vane's sneer shall reach you there !
—You do not listen !

Straf.

Oh . . . I give that up—

There's fate in it—I give all here quite up.

Care not what Vane does or what Holland does
Against me ! 'Tis so idle to withstand them—
In no case tell me what they do !

Car. But Strafford . . .

Straf. I want a little strife, beside—real strife :
This petty, palace-warfare does me harm :
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

Car. Why do you smile ?

Straf. I got to fear them, girl !
I could have torn his throat at first, that Vane,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet, Lucy—but of late
I often found it in my heart to say
"Vane—don't traduce me to her !"

Car. But the King . . .

Straf. The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,
—There, and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend
"Of friends !"—My King ! I would have . . .

Car. . . . Died for him ?

Straf. . . . Sworn him true, Lucy : I will die for him.

Car. (Aside.) What can he mean ? You'd say he
loved him still !

(To STRAFFORD.) But go not, Strafford ! . . . But you
must renounce

This project on the Scots ! Die ! wherefore die ?
Charles never loved you !

Straf. And he will not, now :
He's not of those who care the more for you
That you're unfortunate.

Car. Then wherefore die
For such a master ?

Straf. You that told me first,
How good he was—when I must leave true friends
To find a truer friend !—that drew me here
From Ireland,—"I had but to show myself
"And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest"—

You, girl, to ask me that?

Car. (Aside.) If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!

(To STRAFFORD.) Dear friend
I shall not see you any more!

Straf. Yes, girl—
There's one man here that I shall meet!

Car. (Aside.) The King!—
What way to save him from the King?

My soul . . .
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise
That clothes the King . . . he shall behold my soul!
(To STRAFFORD.) Strafford . . . (I shall speak best if
you'll not gaze

Upon me.) . . . You would perish, too! So sure! . . .
Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my Strafford,
One Image stamped within you, turning blank
The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—
A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw
I' the diamond which should shape forth some sweet face
Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest Nature lose her gracious thought for ever! . . .

Straf. When could it be? . . . no! . . . yet . . . was
it the day

We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber?

Car. What?

Straf. —That I
Described to you my love for Charles?

Car. (Aside.) Ah, no—
One must not lure him from a love like that!
Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past . . .
I shall not serve him worse for that one brief
And passionate hope . . . silent for ever now!
(To STRAFFORD.) And you are really bound for Scotland,
then?

I wish you well : you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
Will not be idle—setting Vane aside !

Straf. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym.

Car. What need when there's your king to take your
part ?

He may endure Vane's counsel ; but for Pym—
Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

Straf. Girl, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's !

Car. Is that to ask
A curl of me ?

Straf. Scotland—the weary way !

Car. Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford ?

Straf. (*Showing the George.*) He hung it there : twine
yours around it, girl !

Car. No—no—another time—I trifle so !

And there's a masque on foot : farewell : the Court
Is dull : do something to enliven us
In Scotland ; we expect it at your hands.

Straf. I shall not fall in Scotland.

Car. Prosper—if
You'll think of me sometimes !

Straf. How think of him
And not of you ? of you—the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve ?

Car. Strafford . . .

Well, when the eve has its last
streak

The night has its first star !

(*Exit.*)

Straf. That voice of hers . . .
You'd think she had a heart sometimes ! His voice
Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.
Be Thou about his bed, about his path ! . . .

His path ! Where's England's path ? Diverging wide,
 And not to join again the track my foot
 Must follow—whither ? All that forlorn way—
 Among the tombs ! Far—far—till . . . What, they do
 Then join again, these paths ? For, huge in the dusk,
 There's—Pym to face !

Why then I have a Foe
 To close with, and a fight to fight at last
 That's worth my soul ! What—do they beard the King—
 And shall the King want Strafford at his need—
 My King—at his great need ? Am I not here ?

. . . Not in the common blessed market-place
 Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
 To catch a glance from Wentworth ! They'll lie down
 Hungry and say "Why, it must end some day—
 "Is he not watching for our sake ?"

—Not there !

But in Whitchall—the whited sepulchre—
 The . . .

(At the Window, and looking on London.)

Curse nothing to-night ! Only one name
 They'll curse in all those streets to-night ! Whose fault ?
 Did I make kings—set up, the first, a man
 To represent the multitude, receive
 All love in right of them—supplanting them
 Until you love the man and not the king—
 The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
 That send me forth . . .

To breast the bloody sea
 That sweeps before me—with one star to guide—
 Night has its first supreme forsaken star !

(Exit.)

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND, and
others of the Court.

Vane. The Commons thrust you out?

Savile. And what kept you
 From sharing their civility?

Vane. Kept me?
 Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last
 If that may be! all's up with Strafford there!
 Nothing's to bar the mad Scots marching hither
 The next fine morning! That detained me, sir!
 Well now, before they thrust you out, go on,
 Their speaker . . . did the fellow Lenthall say
 All we set down for him?

Hol. Not a word missed!
 Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I
 And Bristol and some more, in hopes to breed
 A wholesome awe in the new Parliament—
 But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane!
 They glared at us . . .

Vane. So many?

Savile. Not a bench
 Without its complement of burley knaves—
 Your son, there, Vane, among them—Hampden leant
 Upon his shoulder—think of that!

Vane. I'd think
 On Lenthall's speech, if I could get at it . . .
 He said, I hope, how grateful they should be
 For this unlooked-for summons from the King?

Hol. Just as we drilled him . . .

Vane. That the Scots will march
On London?

Hol. All, and made so much of it
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well?

Hol. 'Tis a strange thing now !
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound—
A voice—a kind of vast, unnatural voice—
Pym, Sir, was speaking ! Savile, help me out,—
What was it all?

Sav. Something about "a matter" . . .
No . . . "a work for England."

Bristol. "England's great revenge"
He talked of.

Sav. How should I be used to Pym
More than yourselves?

Hol. However that may be,
'Twas something with which we had nought to do,
For we were "strangers" and 'twas "England's work"—
(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared:
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we !

Vane. Old Eliot's method . . .

Sav. Ah, now, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments ! 'Twas you
Advised the Queen to summon this—why Strafford
To do him justice would not hear of it !

Vane. Say, rather, you have done the best of turns
To Strafford—he's at York—we all know why !
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford

Till he had put down Pym for us, my lord !

Sav. I? did I alter Strafford's plans? did I . . .

(*Enter a Messenger.*)

Mes. The Queen, my lords . . . she sends me . . . follow me

At once . . . 'tis very urgent . . . she would have
Your counsel . . . something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.

Sav. We follow, friend !

Now Vane . . . your Parliament will plague us all !

Vane. No Strafford here beside !

Sav. If you dare hint

I had a hand in his betrayal, Sir . . .

Hol. Nay find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym
Will overmatch the best of you ; and, think,
The Queen !

Vane. Come on then (*as they go out.*) . . . understand,
I loathe

Strafford as much as any—but he serves
So well to keep off Pym—to screen us all !
I would we had reserved him yet awhile !

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

The QUEEN and CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be !

Car. It is so.

Queen. Why the House
Have hardly met !

Car. They met for that.

Queen. No—no—
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford ! 'Tis a jest !

Car. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider ! 'Tis the House
We summoned so reluctantly—which nothing

But the disastrous issue of the war
 Persuaded us to summon ; they'll wreak all
 Their spite on us, no doubt ; but the old way
 Is to begin by talk of grievances !
 They have their grievances to busy them !

Car. Pym has begun his speech.

Queen. Where's Vane ? . . . That is
 Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
 His Presidency—he's at York, you know,
 Since the Scots beat him—why should he leave York ?

Car. Because the King sends for him.

Queen. Ah . . . but if
 The King did send for him, he let him know
 We had been forced to call a Parliament—
 A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
 Was vehement against . . .

Car. The policy
 Escaped him of first striking Parliaments
 To earth, then setting them upon their feet
 And giving them a sword : but this is idle !
 —Did the King send for Strafford ?

He will come.

Queen. And what am I to do ?

Car. What do ? Fail, Madam !
 Be ruined for his sake ! what matters how
 So it but stand on record that you made
 An effort—only one ?

Queen. The King's away
 At Theobald's.

Car. Send for him at once—he must
 Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
 Of the report—then . . .

Car. . . . it will matter little
 What the king does. Strafford that serves you all—
 That's fighting for you now !

(Enter Sir H. VANE.)

Vane. The Commons, Madam,
Are sitting with closed doors—a huge debate—
No lack of noise—but nothing, I should guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.

Queen. (To CARLISLE.) You hear?

Car. I do not hear
That the King's sent for!

Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

(Enter HOLLAND.)

Queen. The last news, Holland?

Hol. Pym
Is raging like a fiend! The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Strafford.

Queen. Strafford?

Hol. If they content themselves with Strafford! Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too,
Pym has not left out one of them . . . I would
You heard Pym raving!

Queen. Vane, find out the King!
Tell the king, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

(Enter SAVILE.)

Sav. Not to Whitehall—
'Tis to the Lords they go—they'll seek redress
On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,
They call it . . .

Queen. (Wait, Vane!)

Sav. . . . But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men! Strafford can save

Himself so readily : at York, remember,
In his own county, what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York.

Queen. Surely he will not come !
Carlisle, he will not come !

Car. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford—He will come.

Vane. O doubtless ;
And bring destruction with him ; that's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan ?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him ! What's the result ?
The North that was to rise—Ireland to help—
What came of it ? In my poor mind a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.

Car. A fright ?
Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. (*To the QUEEN.*) You will not save
him, then ?

San. When something like a charge is made, the King
Will best know how to save him : and 'tis clear
That, while he suffers nothing by the matter,
The King will reap advantage : this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints !

Queen (*To CARLISLE*). If we dissolve them, who will
pay the army ?
Protect us from the insolent Scots ?

Car. In truth
I know not, Madam : Strafford's fate concerns
Me little : you desired to learn what course
Would save him : I obey you.

Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(*Strafford's revengeful*)—than he'll have
Against this very Pym.

Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym !

Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside ? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.

Hol. He'll keep at York :
All will blow over : he'll return no worse—
Humbled a little—thankful for a place
Under as good a man—Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two !

(*Enter STRAFFORD.*)

Queen. You here !

Straf. The King sends for me, Madam.

Queen. Sir . . .

The King . . .

Straf. An urgent matter that imports the King . . .
(*To CARLISLE.*) Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now
That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me ? They do not speak !

Car. Oh welcome !
. . . And we are proud of you . . . all very proud
To have you with us, Strafford . . . you were brave
At Durham . . . You did well there . . . Had you not
Been stayed you might have . . . we said, even now,
Our last, last hope's in you !

Vane (*To CARLISLE.*) The Queen would speak
A word with you !

Straf. (*To VANE.*) Will one of you vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King ?

Sav. An urgent matter ?

Straf. None that touches you,
Lord Savile ! Say it were some treacherous,

Sly, pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
You would go free, at least! (*Aside.*) They half
divine

My purpose! (*To the QUEEN.*) Madam, shall I see the
King?

The service I would render much concerns
His welfare.

Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may . . .

Straf. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, Madam—
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

Queen. (*Who has been conversing with VANE and
HOLLAND.*) The King will see you, Sir.

(*To CARLISLE.*) Mark me: Pym's worst
Is done by now—he has impeached the Earl,
Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now;
Let us not seem instructed! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye! (*To STRAFFORD.*) His
Majesty

Has much to say with you.

Straf. (*Aside.*) Time fleeting, too!
(*To CARLISLE.*) No means of getting them away, Carlisle?
What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?
What does she think of it? Get them away!

Queen. (*To CARLISLE.*) He comes to baffle Pym—he
thinks the danger

Far off—tell him no word of it—a time
For help will come—we'll not be wanting, then!
Keep him in play, Carlisle—you, self-possessed
And calm! (*To STRAFFORD.*) To spare your Lordship
some delay

I will myself acquaint the King. (*To CARLISLE.*)
Beware!

(*Exeunt QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND and SAVILE.*)

Straf. She knows it?

Car. Tell me, Strafford . . .

Straf. Afterward!

The moment's the great moment of all time!

She knows my purpose?

Car. Thoroughly—just now

She bade me hide it from you.

Straf. Quick, dear girl . . .

The whole grand scheme?

Car. (Aside.) Ah, he would learn if they

Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but

Have once apprized the King! But there's no time

For falsehood, now. (*To STRAFFORD.*) Strafford, the whole is known.

Straf. Known and approved?

Car. Hardly discountenanced.

Straf. And the king—say the king consents as well!

Car. The king's not yet informed, but will not dare To interpose.

Straf. What need to wait him, then?

He'll sanction it! I stayed, girl tell him, long!

It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here—

You know him—there's no counting on the king!

Tell him I waited long!

Car. (Aside.) What can he mean?

Rejoice at the king's hollowness?

Straf. I knew

They would be glad of it,—all over once,

I knew they would be glad . . . but he'd contrive,

The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,

An angel's making!

Car. (Aside.) Is he mad? (*To STRAFFORD.*) Dear Strafford,

You were not wont to look so happy.

Straf. Girl,

I tried obedience thoroughly: I took

The king's wild plan . . . of course, ere I could reach
 My army—Conway ruined it : I drew
 The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
 And would have fought the Scots—the King at once
 Made truce with them : then, Lucy, then, dear girl,
 God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
 For Charles—but never to obey him more !
 While he endured their insolence at Rippon
 I fell on them at Durham.

. . . But you'll tell
 The king I waited ? All the anteroom
 Is filled with my adherents.

Car. Strafford—Strafford
 What daring act is this you hint ?

Straf. No—no !
 'Tis here—not daring if you knew !—all here !
(Drawing papers from his breast.)

Full proof—see—ample proof—does the Queen know
 I have such damning proof ? Bedford and Essex,
 Broke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile ?
 The simper that I spoilt ?) Say, Mandeville—
 Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym !

Car. Great heaven !

Straf. From Savile and his lords, to Pym—
 I crush them, girl—I'ym shall not ward the blow
 Nor Savile crawl aside from it ! The Court
 And the Cabal—I crush them !

Car. And you go . . .
 Strafford,—and now you go ? . . .

Straf. About no work
 In the back-ground, I promise you ! I go
 Straight to the House of Lords to claim these men.
 Mainwaring !

Car. Stay—stay, Strafford !

Straf. She'll return—
 The Queen—some little project of her own—

No time to lose—the King takes fright perhaps—

Car. Pym's strong, remember !

Straf. Very strong—as fits
The Faction's Head . . . with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis—one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan ! Mainwaring !

(Many of his Adherents enter.)

The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots war—my visit's opportune :
When all is over, Bryan, you'll proceed
To Ireland : these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond—
We'll want the Army here—my Army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time ! no matter—
We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . no—You !
You, friend, make haste to York—bear this, at once . . .
Or,—better stay for form's sake—see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring—help to seize the lesser knaves :
Take care there's no escaping at backdoors !
To not have one escape—mind me—not one !
I seem revengeful, Lucy ? Did you know
What these men dare !

Car. It is so much they dare !

Straf. I proved that long ago ; my turn is now !
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens ;
Observe who harbours any of the brood
That scramble off : be sure they smart for it !
Our coffers are but lean.

And you, girl, too,
Shall have your task—deliver this to Laud—
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise !

"Thorough" he'll say!

—Foolish, to be so glad!

This sort of life is vivid, after all!

'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine

For the dear bliss of crushing them! To-day

Is worth the living for!

Car.

That reddening brow!

You seem . . .

Straf.

Well—do I not? I would be well—

I could not but be well on such a day!

And, this day ended, 'tis a slight import

How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul

In Strafford!

Car.

Noble Strafford!

Straf.

No farewell!

I'll see you, girl, to-morrow—the first thing!

—If she should come to stay me!

Car.

Go—'tis nothing—

Only my heart that swells—it has been thus

Ere now—go, Strafford!

Straf.

To-night, then, let it be!

I must see Him . . . I'll see you after Him . . .

I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!

You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour

To talk of all your lives. Close after me!

"My friend of friends!"

(*Exeunt STRAFFORD, &c.*)

Car.

The King—ever the King!

No thought of one beside, whose little word

Unveils the King to him—one word from me—

Which yet I do not breathe!

Ah, have I spared

Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward

Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way

He is the better for my love . . . No, no

He would not look so joyous—I'll believe

In charge ; was he among the knaves just now
That followed Pym within there ?

Another. The gaunt man
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast ? I like it not.

(*Enter MAXWELL.*)

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net ! Here's
Maxwell—

Ha, Maxwell ?—How the brethren flock around
The fellow ! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell ?

Max. Gentlemen,
Stand back ! a great thing passes here.

A Follower of STRAFFORD. [*To another.*] The Earl
Is at his work ! [*To M.*] Say, Maxwell, what great
thing !

Speak out ! [*To a Presbyterian.*] Friends, I've a kind-
ness for you ! Friends,

I've seen you with St. John . . . O stockishness !

Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind

St. John's head in a charger ?

What—the plague—

Not laugh ?

Another. Say Maxwell, what it is !

Another. Hush—wait—
The jest will be to wait—

First. And who's to hear
These quiet hypocrites ? You'd swear they came . . .
Came . . . just as we come !

(*A Puritan enters hastily and without observing
STRAFFORD'S Followers.*)

The PURITAN.
Has Pym . . .

How goes on the work ?

A Follower of STRAFFORD. The secret's out at last—
 Aha,
 The carrion's scented ! Welcome, crow the first !
 Gorge merrily you with the blinking eye !
 " King Pym has fallen ! "

The PURITAN. Pym ?

A STRAFFORD. Pym !

A PRESBYTERIAN. Only Pym ?

Many of STRAFFORD's Followers. No, brother—not
 Pym only—Vane as well—

Rudyard as well—Hampden—Saint John as well—

A PRESBYTERIAN. My mind misgives . . . can it be
 true ?

Another. Lost ! Lost !

A STRAFFORD. Say we true, Maxwell ?

The PURITAN. Pride before destruction,
 A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

Many of STRAFFORD's Followers. Ah now ! The very
 thing ! A word in season !

A golden apple in a silver picture

To greet Pym as he passes !

*(The folding-doors at the back begin to open, noise
 and light issuing.)*

Max. Stand back, all !

Many of the PRESBYTERIANS. I'll die with Pym !
 And I !

STRAFFORD's Followers. Now for the text—
 He comes ! Quick !

The PURITAN (with uplifted arms.) How hath the
 Oppressor ceased !

The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked :

The sceptre of the Rulers—he who smote

The People in wrath with a continual stroke—

That ruled the nations in his anger . . . He

Is persecuted and none hindereth !

(At the beginning of this speech, the doors open, and STRAFFORD in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of "Void the House," staggers out. When he reaches the front of the Stage, silence.)

Straf. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . .
God!

Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart . . . which beats!
Which beats! Some one word . . . "Traitor," did he
say

Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?

Max. *(Advancing.)* In the Commons' name, their
servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Straf. What did you say?

Max. The Commons bid me ask your Lordship's
sword.

Straf. *(suddenly recovering, and looking round, draws it, and turns to his followers.)* Let us go forth—
follow me, gentlemen—

Draw your swords too—cut any down that bar us?
On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!

(The PRESBYTERIANS prepare to dispute his passage.)

Straf. Ha—true! . . . That is, you mistake me,
utterly—

I will stay—the King himself shall see me—here—
Here—I will stay, Mainwaring!—First of all,

(To MAXWELL) Your tablets, fellow! *(He writes on them.)*

(To MAINWARING.) Give that to the King!
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, I will . . .
I will remain your prisoner, I will!

Nay, you shall take my sword !

(MAXWELL *advances to take it.*)

No—no—not that !

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far—
All up to that—not that ! Why, friend, you see
When the King lays his head beneath my foot
It will not pay for that ! Go, all of you !

Max. I grieve, my lord, to disobey : none stir.

Straf. This gentle Maxwell !—Do not touch him,
Bryan !

(*To the PRESBYTERIANS.*) Whichever cur of you will
carry this

I'll save him from the fate of all the rest—

I'll have him made a Peer—I'll . . . none will go ?

None ? (*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD."*)

(*To his FOLLOWERS.*) Sling, by, I've loved you at least—
my friend,

Stab me ! I have not time to tell you why . . .

You then, dear Bryan ! You Mainwaring, then !

. . . Ah, that's because I spoke so hastily

At Allerton—the King had vexed me . . .

(*To the PRESBYTERIANS.*) You

Miscreants—you then—that I'll exterminate !

—Not even you ? If I live over it

The King is sure to have your heads—you know

I'm not afraid of that—you understand

That if I chose to wait—made up my mind

To live this minute—he would do me right !

But what if I can't live this minute through ?

If nothing can repay that minute ? Pym

With his pursuing smile—Pym to be there !

(*Louder cries of "STRAFFORD."*)

The King ! I troubled him—stood in the way

Of his negotiations—was the one

Great obstacle to peace—the Enemy

Of Scotland—and he sent for me—from York—

My safety guaranteed—having prepared
 A Parliament! I see! And at Whitehall
 The Queen was whispering with Vane . . . I see
 The trap! I curse the King! I wish Pym well!
 Wish all his brave friends well! Say, all along
 Strafford was with them—all along, at heart,
 I hated Charles and wished them well! And say
 (tearing off the George and dashing it down)
 That as I tread this gew-gaw under foot,
 I cast his memory from me! One stroke, now!
(His own adherents disarm him. Renewed cries of
 "STRAFFORD!")
 I'll not go . . . they shall drag me by the hair!
(Changing suddenly to calm.) England! I see her arm
 in this! I yield.
 Why—'tis the fairest triumph! Why desire
 To cheat them? I would never stoop to that—
 Be mean enough for that! Let all have end!
 Don't repine, Slingsby . . . have they not a right?
 They claim me—hearken—lead me to them, Bryan!
 No—I myself should offer up myself.
 I pray you now . . . Pym awaits me . . . pray you now!
 . . . *(Putting aside those who attempt to support him,*
 STRAFFORD reaches the doors—they open wide.
 HAMPDEN, etc., and a crowd discovered; and
 at the bar, PYM standing apart. As STRAF-
 FORD kneels the scene shuts.)

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Whitchhall.*

The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, in the back-ground.)

Car. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake!—One word!

Cha. (To HOLLIS.) You stand, silent and cold, as though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times! What wonder after all?
Just so I dreamed my People loved me!

Hol. Sire,

It is yourself that you deceive, not me!
You'll quit me comforted—your mind made up
That since you've talked thus much and grieved thus much,
All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford . . . come, we grant you leave,

Suppose . . .

Hol. I may withdraw, Sire?

Car. Hear them out!

'Tis the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!

Hol. "If we kill Strafford"—on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—*We!*

Cha. Pym, my good Hollis—

Pym, I should say!

Hol. Ah, true—Sire, pardon me!

You witness our proceedings every day,
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us—
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view!

Still, on my honour, Sire, the rest of the place
Is not unoccupied : the Commons sit
—That's England ; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,
Their representatives : the Peers that judge
Are easily distinguished ; one remarks
The People here and there . . . but the close curtain
Must hide so much !

Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside !
It served a purpose !

Hol. Think ! This very day ?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself ?

Cha. I will defend him, Sir ! sanction the past—
This day—it ever was my purpose ! Rage
At me, not Strafford ! Oh I shall be paid
By Strafford's look !

Car. (To HOLLIS.) Nobly ! Oh will he not
Do nobly ?

Hol. Sire, you will do honestly ;
And, for that look, I too would be a king !

Cha. (after a pause.) Only, to do this now—just when
they seek

To make me out a tyrant—one that's deaf
To subjects' prayers,—shall I oppose them now ?
It seems their will the Trial should proceed . . .
'Tis palpably their will !

Hol. You'll lose your throne :
But it were no bright moment save for that !
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree
That props this quaking House of Privilege,
{Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous
sand !}

Doubtless if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you'd save Strafford !

Cha. And they mean
Calmly to consummate this wrong ! No hope ?

This inefaceable wrong ! No pity then ?

Hol. No plague in store for perfidy ?—Farewell !
You summoned me . . . (*To CARLISLE.*) You, Lady
bade me come

To save the Earl ! I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go !

. . . You dare to talk with me of saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford !

Cha.

I ?

Hol.

See, now !

Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Our charges back : a blind moth-eaten law !
—He'll break from us at last ! And whom to thank ?
The Mouse that gnawed the Lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other Mouse,
That looked on while the Lion freed himself—
Fared he so well, does any fable say ?

Cha. What can you mean ?

Hol. Pym never could have prove
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience : Vane—
Your servant, Vane . . .

Queen.

Well, Sir ?

Hol.

. . . Has proved it.

Cha.

Vane

Hol. This day ! Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Have sealed . . .

Cha. Speak Vane ! As I shall live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done ! What treason next ?
I wash my hands of it ! Vane, speak the truth !
—Ask Vane himself !

Hol.

I will not speak to Vane
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day !

Queen. Speak to Vane's master then ! Why should he
wish

For Strafford's death?

Hol. Why? Strafford cannot turn
As you sit there—bid you come forth and say
If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission?—Whether you contrived
Or no that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways—your own, as if
He counteracted your kind impulses
While . . . but you know what he could say! And
then

Would he produce, mark you, a certain charge
To set your own express commands aside,
If need were, and be blameless! He'd say, then . . .

Cha. Hold!

Hol. . . . Say who bade him break the
Parliament,—
Find out some pretext to set up sword-law . . .

Queen. Retire, Sir!

Cha. Vane—once more—what Vane dares do
I know not . . . he is rash . . . a fool . . . I know
Nothing of Vane!

Hol. Well—I believe you; Sire
Believe me, in return, that . . .

(*Turning to CARLISLE.*) Gentle Lady,
The few words I would say the stones might hear
Sooner than these . . . I'll say them all to you,
You, with the heart! The question, trust me, takes
Another shape, to-day: 'tis not if Charles
Or England shall succumb,—but which shall pay
The forfeit, Strafford or his Master: Sire,
You loved me once . . . think on my warning now!

(*Exit.*)

Cha. On you and on your warning both!—Carlisle!
That paper!

Queen. But consider!

Cha. Give it me!

There—signed—will that content you?—Do not speak !
 You have betrayed me, Vane !—See—any day
 (According to the tenour of that paper)
 He bids your brother bring the Army up—
 Strafford shall head it and take full revenge !
 Seek Strafford ! Let him have it, look, before
 He rises to defend himself !

Queen. In truth ?
 Clever of Hollis, now, to work a change
 Like this ! You were reluctant . . .

Cha. Say, Carlisle
 Your brother Percy brings the Army up—
 Falls on the Parliament—(I'll think of you
 My Hollis !)—say we plotted long . . . 'tis *mine*,
 The scheme is mine, remember ! Say I cursed
 Vane's folly in your hearing ! If that man
 Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
 With you, Carlisle !

Car. Nay, fear not me ! but still
 That's a bright moment, Sire, you throw away . . .
 Oh, draw the veil and save him !

Queen. Go, Carlisle !
Car. (aside, and going). I shall see Strafford—speak to
 him : my heart
 Must never beat so, then !

And if I tell
 The truth ? What's gained by falsehood ? There they
 stand
 Whose trade it is—whose life it is ! How vain
 To gild such rottenness ! Strafford shall know,
 Thoroughly know them !

The Queen (as she leaves the KING, &c.) Trust to me !
 [To CARLISLE.] Carlisle,
 You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
 To serve poor Strafford : this bold plan of yours
 Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Car. Time presses, Madam.

Queen. Yet . . . may it not be something premature?
 Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves
 Some wondrous effort . . . one may well suppose—
 He'll say some overwhelming fact, Carlisle!

Car. Aye, Hollis hints as much.

Cha. Why linger then?
 Haste with the scheme—my scheme—I shall be there
 To watch his look! Tell him I watch his look!

Queen. Stay, we'll precede you!

Car. At your pleasure.

Cha. Say . . .
 Say . . . Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!
 I shall be there, remember!

Car. Doubt me not!

Cha. On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here!

Car. I'll bring his answer; Sire, I follow you.

(Exeunt K., &c.)

Ah . . . but he would be very sad to find
 The King so faithless, and I take away
 All that he cares to live for: let it go—
 'Tis the King's scheme!

My Strafford, I can save . . .
 Nay, I have saved you—yet am scarce content,
 Because my poor name will not cross your mind . . .
 Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!

(Exit.)

SCENE II.—*A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall*

*Many groups of Spectators of the Trial (which is visible
 from the back of the Stage)—Officers of the Court, &c.*

1st Spec. More crowd than ever! . . . Not know
 Hampden, man?

That's he—by Pym—Pym that is speaking now!
 No, truly—if you look so high you'll see

Little enough of either !

2nd Spec. Hush . . . Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod !

3rd Spec. Ay—ay—we've heard
Some pretty speaking . . . yet the Earl escapes !

4th Spec. I fear it: just a foolish word or two
About his children . . . and they see, forsooth,
Not England's Foe in Strafford—but the Man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .

2nd Spec. What's that Pym's saying now
That makes the curtains flutter? . . . look ! A hand
Clutches them . . . Ah ! The King's hand !

5th Spec. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall ! What said he, friend ?

2nd Spec. "Nor is this way a novel way of blood" . . .
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look ! look !

Many Spectators. Heaven—
What ails him . . . no—he rallies . . . see—goes on
And Strafford smiles. Strange !

(Enter a PURITAN.)

The Puritan. * Haselrig !

Many Spectators. Friend ? Friend ?

The Puritan. Lost—utterly lost . . . just when we
looked for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech ! Is Haselrig without ?

Pym's message is to him ! * (Exit.)

3rd Spec. Now, said I true ?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no ?

1st Spec. Never believe it, man ! These notes of
Vane's
Ruin the Earl.

5th Spec. A brave end . . . not a whit
Less firm, less . . . Pym all over ! Then, the Trial
Is closed . . . no . . . Strafford means to speak again !

An Officer. Stand back, there !

5th Spec. Why the Earl is coming hither !
Before the court breaks up ! His brother, look,—
You'd say he deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now !

An Officer. Stand back, I say !

2nd Spec. Who's the veiled woman that he talks with ?

Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl ! the Earl !

[*Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY and other Secretaries,
HOLLIS, CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, &c.
STRAFFORD converses with CARLISLE.*]

Hol. So near the end ! Be patient—
Return !

Straf. [*To his Secretaries.*] Here—anywhere—or—
'tis freshest here . . .

(To spend one's April here—the blossom-month !)
Set it down here ! [*They arrange a table, papers, &c.*]

What, Pym to quail, to sink
Because I glance at him, yet . . .

Well, to end—
What's to be answered, Slingsby ? Let us end !

[*To CARLISLE.*] Girl, I refuse his offer ; whatso'er
It be ! Too late ! Tell me no word of him !

[*To HOLLIS.*] 'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you that—
To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days
Fighting for life and fame against a pack
Of very curs, that lie thro' thick and thin,
Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say
"Strafford" if it would take my life !

Car. Be kind
This once ! Glance at the paper . . . if you will

But glance at it, . . .
Straf. Already at my heels !

Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again !
Peace, girl ! Now, Slingsby !

*(Messengers from Lane and other of STRAFFORD'S
Counsel within the Hall are coming and going
during the Scene.)*

*Straf. (setting himself to write and dictate). I shall
beat you, Hollis !*

Do you know that ? In spite of all your tricks—
In spite of Pym ! Your Pym that shrank from me !
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise !
(To a Messenger.) In truth ? This slip, tell Lane, con-
tains as much

As I can call to mind about the matter.

(To HOLLIS.) Eliot would have disdained . . .

(Calling after the Messenger.) And Radcliffe, say—
The only person who could answer Pym—
Is safe in prison, just for that !

(Continuing to HOLLIS.) Well—well—
It had not been recorded in that case,
I baffled you !

(To CARLISLE.) Nay, girl, why look so grieved ?
All 's gained without the King ! You saw Pym quail ?
. . . What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,
But tranquilly resume my task as though
Nothing had intervened since I proposed
To call that traitor to account ! Such tricks,
Trust me, shall not be played a second time—
Even against old Laud, with his grey hair . . .
Your good work, Hollis !—And to make amends
You, Lucy, shall be there when I impeach
Pym and his fellows !

Hol. Wherefore not protest
Against our whole proceeding long ago ?
Why feel indignant now ? Why stand this while
Enduring patiently . . .

Straf. (*To CARLISLE.*) Girl, I'll tell you—
 You—and not Pym . . . you, the slight graceful girl
 Tall for a flowering lily—and not Charles . . .
 Why I stood patient! I was fool enough
 To see the will of England in Pym's will—
 To dream that I had wronged her—and to wait
 Her judgment,—when, behold, in place of it . . .
 (*To a Messenger who whispers.*) Tell Lane to answer no
 such question! Law . . .

I grapple with their Law! I'm here to try
 My actions by their standard, not my own!
 Their Law allowed that levy . . . what's the rest
 To Pym, or Lane, or any but myself?

Car. Then cast not thus your only chance away—
 The King's so weak . . . secure this chance! 'Twas Vane
 —Vane, recollect, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

Straf. Fit . . . very fit . . . those precious notes of Vane,
 To close the Trial worthily! I feared
 Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
 To spoil the character of all the past!
 It pleased me . . . and (*rising passionately*) I will go
 back and say

As much—to them—to England! Follow me!
 I have a word to say! There! my defence
 Is done!

(*To CARLISLE.*) Stay . . . why be proud? Why care
 to own

My gladness—my surprise? . . . no—not surprise!
 Oh, why insist upon the little pride
 Of doing all myself and sparing him
 The pain? Girl, say the triumph is my King's!
 When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down—
 His image was before me . . . could I fail?
 Girl, care not for the past—so indistinct—
 Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it
 'Tis so forgotten! From this day begins

A new life, founded on a new belief

In Charles . . .

Hol. Pym comes . . . tell Pym it is unfair !
Appeal to Pym ! Hampden—and Vane ! see, Strafford !
Say how unfair . . .

Straf. To Pym ? I would say nothing !
I would not look upon Pym's face again !

Car. Stay . . . let me have to think I pressed your
hand !

[*Exeunt STRAFFORD &c.*

(*Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.*)

Vane. O Hampden, save that great misguided man !
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym—I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all spoke loud
Against him . . . you had but to breathe—he turned
Those kind, large eyes upon you—kind to all
But Strafford . . . whom I murder !

[*Enter PYM (conversing with the Solicitor-General,
ST. JOHN), the Managers of the Trial, FIENNES,
RUDYARD, &c.*]

Rud. Horrible !
Till now all hearts were with you . . . I withdraw
For one ! Too horrible ! Oh we mistake
Your purpose, Pym . . . you cannot snatch away
The last spar from the drowning man !

Fien. He talks
With St. John of it—see how quietly !
[*To other PRESBYTERIANS.*] You'll join us ? Mind, we
own he merits death—

But this new course is monstrous ! Vane, take heart !
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.

Vane. But hear me, Pym !
Confront your Bill—your own Bill . . . what is it ?

You cannot catch the Earl on any charge . . .
 No man will say the Law has hold of him
 On any charge . . . and therefore you resolve
 To take the general sense on his desert,—
 As though no Law existed, and we met
 To found one !—You refer to every man
 To speak his thought upon this hideous mass
 Of half-borne out assertions—dubious hints
 Hereafter to be cleared—distortions—aye,
 And wild inventions. Every man is saved
 The task of fixing any single charge
 On Strafford : he has but to see in him
 The Enemy of England . . .

Pym. A right scruple !
 I have heard some called England's Enemy
 With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me !
 Me—brought so low—who hoped to do so much
 For England—her true Servant—Pym, your friend . . .
 Indeed you made me think I was your friend !
 But I have murdered Strafford. . . . I have been
 The instrument of this ! who shall remove
 That memory from me ?

Pym. I absolve you, Vane !
 Take you no care for aught that you have done !

Vane. Dear Hampden, not this Bill ! Reject this Bill !
 He staggers thro' the ordeal . . . let him go !
 Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !
 With Pym . . . what God is he, to have no heart
 Like ours, yet make us love him ?

Rud. Hampden, plead
 For us ! When Strafford spoke your eyes were thick
 With tears . . . save him, dear Hampden !

Hamp. England speaks
 Louder than Strafford ! Who are we, to play
 The generous pardoner at her expense—

Magnanimously waive advantages—

And if he conquer us . . . applaud his skill?

Vane. (To PYM.) He was your friend!

Pym.

I have heard that before.

Fien. But England trusts you . . .

Hamp.

Shame be his, who turns

The opportunity of serving her

She trusts him with, to his own mean account—

Who would look nobly frank at her expense!

Fien. I never thought it could have come to this!

Pym (turning from ST. JOHN). But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,

With that one thought—have walked, and sat, and slept,

That thought before me! I have done such things,

Being the chosen man that should destroy

This Strafford! You have taken up that thought

To play with—for a gentle stimulant—

To give a dignity to idler life

By the dim prospect of this deed to come . . .

But ever with the softening, sure belief,

That all would come some strange way right at last!

Fien. Had we made out some weightier charge . . .

Pym.

You say

That these are petty charges! Can we come

To the real charge at all? There he is safe!

In tyranny's stronghold! Apostasy

Is not a crime—Treachery not a crime!

The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you name

Their names, but where's the power to take revenge

Upon them? We must make occasion serve:

The Oversight, pay for the Giant Sin

That mocks us!

Rud.

But this unexampled course—

This Bill . . .

Pym.

By this, we roll the clouds away

Of Precedent and Custom, and at once

Bid the great light which God has set in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford : each shall lay his hand
Upon his breast, and say if this one man
Deserve to die, or no, by those he sought
First to undo.

Fien. You, Vane—you answer him !

Vane. Pym, you see farthest . . . I can only see
Strafford . . . I'd not pass over that pale corpse
For all beyond !

Rud. and others. Pym, you would look so great !
Forgive him ! He would join us ! now he finds
How false the King has been ! The pardon, too,
Should be your own ! Yourself should bear to Strafford
The pardon of the Commons !

Pym (starting). Meet him ? Strafford ?
Have we to meet once more, then ? Be it so !
And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the trial, as he gazed—my youth—
Our friendship—all old thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time . . .

Vane (aside to RUDYARD). Moved, is he not ?

Pym. Tomorrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane . . . to-morrow !

Vane. Time enough, dear Pym !
See, he relents ! I knew he would relent !

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce,
The Bill of his Attainder. (*After a pause.*) Pray for me !

SCENE III.—*Whitehall.*

The KING.

Cha. Strafford, you are a Prince ! Not to reward you
—Nothing does that—but only for a whim !
My noble servant !—To defend himself
Thus irresistibly . . . withholding aught

That seemed to implicate us !

**Less gallantly by Strafford ! We have done
Must recompense the past. Well, the future**

I understand you, Strafford, now !

The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me ! 'Twas too precipitate:
Before the Army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large: no matter . . .

Well, Carlisle?

(Enter PYM.)

***Pym.* Fear me not, Sir . . . my mission is to save,
This time !**

Cha. To break thus on me !—Unannounced . . .

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Cha. No more
Of Strafford ! I have heard too much from you !

Pym. I spoke, Sire, for the People: will you hear
A word upon my own account?

Cha. Of Strafford?
(*Aside.*) So, turns the tide already? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler?—Strafford's brave defence
Is swift in its effect! (*To PYM.*) Lord Strafford, Sir,
Has spoken for himself!

Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprize you of the novel course
The people take : the Trial fails, . . .

Cha. We are aware, Sir : for your part in it ,
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule! (as the KING reads it) I would learn
from your own mouth

—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
 Whether, if two Estates of England shall concede
 The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
 Within that parchment, you, Sire, can resolve
 To grant your full consent to it. That Bill
 Is framed by me: if you determine, Sire,
 That England's manifested will shall guide
 Your judgment, ere another week that will
 Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
 Aside the measure.

Cha. . . . You can hinder, then,
 The introduction of that Bill?

Pym. I can.

Cha. He is my friend, Sir: I have wronged him:
 mark you,

Had I not wronged him—this might be!—You think
 Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away—
 We know you hate him)—no one else could love
 Strafford . . . but he has saved me—many times—
 Think what he has endured . . . proud too . . . you feel
 What he endured!—And; do you know one strange,
 One frightful thing? We all have used that man
 As though he had been ours . . . with not a source
 Of happy thoughts except in us . . . and yet
 Strafford has children, and a home as well,
 Just as if we had never been! . . . Ah Sir,
 You are moved—you—a solitary man
 Wed to your cause—to England if you will!

Pym. Yes . . . think, my soul . . . to England!
 Draw not back!

Cha. Prevent that Bill, Sir . . . Oh, your course was fair
 Till now! Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign
 The warrant for his death! You have said much
 That I shall ponder on; I never meant
 Strafford should serve me any more: I take
 The Commons' counsel: but this Bill is yours—

Not worthy of its leader . . . care not, Sir,
For that, however ! I will quite forget
You named it to me ! You are satisfied ?

Pym. Listen to me, Sire ! Eliot laid his hand,
Wasted and white, upon my forehead once ;
Wentworth . . . he's gone now ! . . . has talked on,
whole nights,
And I beside him ; Hampden loves me ; Sire,
How can I breathe and not wish England well—
And her King well ?

Cha. I thank you, Sir ! You leave
That King his servant ! Thanks, Sir !

Pym. Let me speak
—Who may not speak again ! whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day !
—Who would not have my heart turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe . . .
I thought, Sire, could I find myself with you—
After this Trial—alone—as man to man—
I might say something—warn you—pray you—save you—
Mark me, King Charles, save—you !
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, Sire—
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved
—"How long the Many shall endure the One" . . .
Assure me, Sire, if England shall assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere !
Or—

Cha. God forsakes me ! I am in a net . . .
I cannot move ! Let all be as you say !

(*Enter CARLISLE.*)

Car. He loves you—looking beautiful with joy
Because you sent me ! he would spare you all
The pain ! he never dreamed you would forsake

Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
 Your scheme returned ! That generous heart of his !
 He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
 A course that might endanger you—you, Sire,
 Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

[*Seeing Pym.*]

No fear—

No fear for Strafford ! all that's true and brave
 On your own side shall help us ! we are now
 Stronger than ever !

Ha—what, Sire, is this ?

All is not well ! What parchment have you there ?

(*CHARLES drops it, and exit.*)

Pym. Sire, much is saved us both : farewell !

Car.

Stay—stay—

This cursed measure—you'll not dare—you mean
 To frighten Charles ! This Bill—look—

(*As Pym reads it.*)

Why, your lip

Whitens—you could not read one line to me
 Your voice would falter so ! It shakes you now—
 And will you dare . . .

Pym.

No recreant yet to her !

The great word went from England to my soul,
 And I arose ! The end is very near ! (*Exit.*)

Car. I save him ! All have shrunk from him beside—
 'Tis only I am left ! Heaven will make strong
 The hand as the true heart ! Then let me die !

(*Exit.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, CARLISLE.

Hol. Tell the King, then ! Come in with me !*Car.* Not so !

He must not hear, 'till it succeeds !

Hol. Vain ! Vain !

No dream was half so vain—you'll rescue Strafford

And outwit Pym ! I cannot tell you . . . girl,

The block pursues me—all the hideous show . . .

To-day . . . is it to-day ? And all the while

He's sure of the King's pardon . . . think, I have

To tell this man he is to die !

The King

May rend his hair, for me ! I'll not see Strafford !

Car. Only, if I succeed, remember—Charles

Has saved him ! He would hardly value life

Unless his gift.

My staunch friends wait ! Go in—

You must go in to Charles !

Hol. And all beside

Left Strafford long ago—the King has signed

The warrant for his death . . . the Queen was sick

Of the eternal subject ! For the Court,—

The Trial was amusing in its way

Only too much of it . . . the Earl withdrew

In time ! But you—fragile—alone—so young !

Amid rude mercenaries—you devised

A plan to save him ! Even tho' it fails

What shall reward you ?

Lady Car. I may go, you think,
To France with him? And you reward me, friend!
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his—
I have learned somewhat of his latter life
And all the future I shall know—but, Hollis,
I ought to make his youth my own as well!
Tell me—when he is saved!

Hol. My gentle girl,
He should know all—should love you—but 'tis vain!
Car. No—no—too late now! Let him love the King!
'Tis the King's scheme! I have your word—re-
member!—

We'll keep the old delusion up! But, hush!
Hush! Each of us has work to do, beside!
Go to the King! I hope—Hollis—I hope!
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak
Think where He is! Now for my gallant friends!
(*Exit.*)

Hol. Where He is! Calling wildly upon Charles—
Guessing his fate—pacing the prison-floor . . .
Let the King tell him! I'll not look on Strafford!
(*Exit.*)

SCENE II.—*The Tower.*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his Children.* *They sing.*

*O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!*

William. (The boat's in the broad moonlight all this
while)

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera.*

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
 Into the shadowy distance—only still
 You hear the dipping oar,

Verso la sera . . .

And faint—and fainter—and then all's quite gone,
 Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep!

Straf. I do sleep, dearest; or if not—you know
 There's such a thing as . . .

Wil. You're too tired to sleep?

Straf. It will come by and bye and all day long,
 In that old quiet house I told you of: .
 We'll sleep safe there.

Anne. Why not in Ireland?

Straf. Ah!

Too many dreams!—That song's for Venice, William:
 You know how Venice looks upon the map . . .
 Isles that the mainland hardly can let go? .

Wil. You've been to Venice, father?

Straf. I was young then.

Wil. A city with no King; that's why I like
 Even a song that comes from Venice!

Straf. William!

Wil. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?
 But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

Straf. See many lands, boy—England last of all,—
 That way you'll love her best.

Wil. Why do men say

You sought to ruin her, then!

Straf. Ah . . . they say that.

Wil. Why?

Straf. I suppose they must have words to say,
 As you to sing.

Anne. But they make songs beside:

Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names !

Wil. Don't mind her, father !
They soon left off when I called out to them !

Straf. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy !
'Tis not worth while : who heeds a foolish song ?

Wil. Why, not the King !

Straf. Well : it has been the fate
Of better men, and yet . . . why not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic Day's caprice—consign
Unto the ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again—
That Time will do me right ?

Anne. (Shall we sing, William ?
He does not look thus when we sing.)

Straf. For Ireland,—
Something is done . . . too little, but enough
To show what might have been :—

Wil. (I have no heart
To sing now ! Anne, how very sad he looks !
Oh I so hate the King for all he says !)

Straf. Forsook them ! What, the common songs will
run

That I forsook the People ? Nothing more ?
. . . Aye, Fame, the scribe, will pause awhile, no doubt,
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves
Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
All curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name—
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford !
(The children resume their song timidly, but break off.)

Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.

Straf. No . . . Hollis ? in good time !—Who is he ?

Hol.

One

That must be present.

Straf.

Ah—I understand——

They will not let me see poor Laud alone !

How politic ! They'd use me by degrees

To solitude : and just as you came in

I was solicitous what life to lead

When Strafford's "not so much as Constable

"In the King's service." Is there any means

To keep one's self awake ? What would you do

After this bustle, Hollis, in my place ?

Hol. Strafford . . .*Straf.*

Observe, not but that Pym and you

Will find me news enough—news I shall hear

Under a quince tree by a fish-pond side

At Wentworth. Or, a better project now—

What if when all is over, and the Saints

Reign, and the Senate goes on swimmingly,—

What if I venture up, some day, unseen—

To saunter through the Town—notice how Pym,

The Tribune, likes Whitehall—drop quietly

Into a tavern—hear a point discussed—

As, whether Strafford's name were John or Richard—

And be myself appealed to . . . I, who shall

Myself have near forgotten !

Hol.

I would speak . . .

Straf. Then you shall speak,—not now : I want, just

now,

To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place

Is full of ghosts !

Hol.

Will you not hear me, Strafford ?

Straf. Oh, readily ! . . . Only, one droll thing more,—

The minister ! Who will advise the King,

And yet have health—children, for aught I know !

—My patient pair of traitors ! Ah . . . but, William—

Does not his cheek grow thin ?

Wil. 'Tis you look thin,
Father!

Straf. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to rights!

Hol. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

Straf. No,
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, Hollis?

. . . Say at once
The King could find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's?

Hol. Hush: no such affair
Detains him.

Straf. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore!—Well: when he pleases,—
Only, I want the air: it vexes one
To be pent up so long!

Hol. The King . . . I bear
His message, Strafford . . . pray you, let me speak!
Straf. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!
(*The children retire.*)

They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here at once—
Leading me forth before them by the hand,—
I know the King will leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping . . . let me fly
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river!

Hol. (to his Companion.) Tell him all;
I knew my throat would thicken thus . . . Speak, you!

Straf. 'Tis all one—I forgive him. Let me have
The order of release!

. . . I've heard, as well,

Of certain poor manœuvrings to avoid
 The granting pardon at his proper risk ;
 First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords—
 Must talk a trifle with the Commons first—
 Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
 And far from blaming them, and . . .
 . . . Where's the order ?

Hol. Spare me !

Straf. Why . . . he'd not have me steal away ?
 —With an old doublet and awsteeple hat
 Like Prynne's ? Be smuggled into France, perhaps ?
 Hollis, 'tis for my children ! 'Twas for them
 I e'er consented to stand day by day
 And give those Puritans the best of words—
 Be patient—speak when called upon—observe
 Their rules,—and not give all of them the lie !

Hol. No—Strafford . . . no escape . . . no . . .
 dearest Strafford !

Straf. What's in that boy of mine that he should be
 Son to a prison-breaker ? I shall stay,
 And he'll stay with me. Charles should know as much—
 He too has children !
 (*Turning to HOLLIS'S companion.*) Ah, you feel for me !
 No need to hide that face ! Though it have looked
 Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
 Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
 Still there is One who does not come—there's One
 That shut out Heaven from me . . .

Hol. Think on it then !
 On Heaven . . . and calmly . . . as one . . . as one
 to die !

Straf. Die ? True, friend, all must die, and all must
 need
 Forgiveness : I forgive him from my soul.

Hol. Be constant, now . . . be grand and brave . . .
 be now

Just as when . . . Oh, I cannot stay for words . . .
 'Tis a world's wonder . . . but . . . but . . . you must
 die!

Straf. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
 This heartless jest will . . .

Hollis—you turn white,
 And your lip shivers!—What if. . .

Oh, we'll end,
 We'll end this! See this paper—warm . . . feel . . .
 warm

With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
 Whose promise? Read! Read loud! For God to hear!
 "Strafford shall take no hurt" . . . read it, I say!
 "In person, honour, nor estate." . . .

Hol. The King . . .

Straf. I could unking him by a breath! You sit
 Where Loudon sat . . . Loudon, who came to tell
 The certain end, and offer me Pym's pardon
 If I'd forsake the King—and I stood firm
 On my King's faith! The King who lived . . .

Hol. To sign

The warrant for your death.

Straf. "Put not your trust
 "In Princes, neither in the sons of men,
 "In whom is no salvation!" On that King—
 Upon his head. . .

Cha. O Hollis, he will curse me!

Hol. The scaffold is prepared—they wait for you—
 He has consented . . .

Cha. No, no—stay first—Strafford!
 You would not see me perish at your foot . . .

It was wrung from me! Only curse me not!

The Queen had cruel eyes! And Vane declared . . .

And I believed I could have rescued you . . .

Strafford—they threaten me! and . . . well, speak now,
 And let me die!—

Hol. (To STRAFFORD.) As you hope grace from God,
Be merciful to this most wretched man !
VOICES FROM WITHIN.

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera.*

Straf. (After a pause.) You'll be good to those
children, Sire? I know
You'll not believe her even should the Queen
Think they take after one they never saw !
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters . . . but you are
So utterly deprived of friends ! He too
Must serve you—will you not be good to him ?
Stay, Sire—stay—do not promise—do not swear !
And, Hollis—do the best you can for me !
I've not a soul to trust to : Wandesford's dead—
And you've got Radcliffe safe—and Laud is here. . . .
I've had small time of late for my affairs—
But I'll trust any of you . . . Pym himself—
No one could hurt them : there's an infant, too—
. . . These tedious cares ! Your Majesty could spare
them—
But 'tis so awkward—dying in a hurry !
. . . Nay—Pardon me, my King ! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, and temptations
And weakness . . . I have said a pceevish word—
But, mind I bless you at the last ! You know
'Tis between you and me . . . what has the world
To do with it ? Farewell !

Cha. (at the door.) Balfour ! Balfour !
. . . What, die ? Strafford to die ? This Strafford here ?
Balfour ! . . . Nay Strafford, do not speak . . . Balfour !

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament . . . go to them—I grant all

Demands! Their sittings shall be permanent—
 Tell them to keep their money if they will . . .
 I'll come to them for every coat I wear
 And every crust I eat, only I choose
 To pardon Strafford—Strafford—my brave friend!

Bal. (aside.) Is he mad, Hollis?

Cha. Strafford, now, to die!
 . . . But the Queen . . . ah, the Queen!—
 make haste, Balfour!
 —You never heard the people howl for blood,
 Beside!

Bal. Your Majesty may hear them now:
 The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:
 Please you retire!

Cha. Take all the troops, Balfour!

Bal. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

Cha. Come with me, Strafford! You'll not fear them,
 friend!

Straf. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
 I charge you, as a dying man, forget
 You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
 Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,
 The King was sorry—very—'tis no shame!
 Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,—
 And that I walked the lighter to the block
 Because of it, I shall walk lightly, Sir!
 —For I shall save you . . . save you at the last!
 Earth fades, Heaven dawns on me . . . I shall wake next
 Before God's throne: the moment's close at hand.
 When Man the first, last time, has leave to lay
 His whole heart bare before its Maker—leave
 To clear up the long error of a life
 And choose one happiness for evermore.
 With all mortality about me, Charles,
 The sudden wreck—the dregs—the violent death . . .
 I'll pray for you! Thro' all the Angel-song

Advance the torches, Bryan !

Straf. I will die !
 They call me proud . . . but England had no right
 When she encountered me—her strength to mine—
 To find the chosen foe a craven ! Girl,
 I fought her to the utterance—I fell—
 I am hers now . . . and I will die ! Beside
 The lookers-on ! Eliot is all about
 This place with his most uncomplaining brow !

Car. Strafford !

Straf. I think if you could know how much
 I love you, you would be repaid, my girl !

Car. Then, for my sake !

Straf. Even for your sweet sake . . .
 I stay.

Hol. For *their* sake !

Straf. I bequeath a stain . . .
 Leave me ! Girl, humour me and let me die !

Hol. No way to draw him hence—Carlisle—no way ?

Car. (*suddenly to CHARLES*). Bid him escape . . .
 wake, King ! Bid him escape !

Straf. (*Looking earnestly at him.*) Yes, I will go ! Die,
 and forsake the King ?

I'll not draw back from the last service.

Car. Strafford !

Straf. And, after all, what is disgrace to me ?
 Let us come, girl ! . . . That it should end this
 way !

Lead then . . . but I feel strangely . . . it was not
 To end this way !

Car. Lean—lean on me !

Straf. My King !
 Oh, had he trusted me—his Friend of friends—
 Had he but trusted me !

Car. Leave not the king—
 I can support him, Hollis !

Straf. (*Starting as they approach the door at the back.*)

Not this way;

This gate . . . I dreamed of it . . . this very gate!

Car. It opens on the river—our good boat
Is moored below—our friends are there!

Straf.

The same!

Only with something ominous and dark,
Fatal, inevitable . . .

Car.

Strafford! Strafford!

Straf. Not by this gate . . . I feel it will be there!
I dreamed of it, I tell you . . . touch it not!

Car. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King!

(*As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered
with HAMPDEN, VANE, &c. STRAFFORD falls
back to the front of the stage: PYM follows slowly
and confronts him.*)

Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose
great sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made
Barren, my future dark, to offer up
Her sacrifice—this man, this Wentworth here—
That walked in youth with me—loved me it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the grave
That yawns for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitter pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us,—but I
Would never leave him: I do leave him now!
I render up my charge (be witness, God!)
To England who imposed it! I have done
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be
With ill effects—for I am but a man . . .
Still, I have done my best, my very best,

Not faltering for a moment ! I have done !

(*After a pause.*)

And that said, I will say . . . yes, I will say
I never loved but this man—David not
More Jonathan ! Even thus, I love him now ;
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be . . . and . . . yes . . . it will be
soon :

My mission over, I shall not live long !)—
. . . Aye here I know I talk—and I will talk
Of England—and her great reward—as all
I look for there ; but in my inmost heart
Believe I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth—with my friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us ! Then indeed . . .
(This is no meeting, Wentworth ! Tears rise up
Too hot . . . A thin mist—is it blood?—enwraps
The face I loved so !) Then, shall the meeting be !
Then—then—then—I may kiss that hand, I know !

Straf. (Walks calmly up to Pym and offers his hand)
I have loved England too ; we'll meet then, Pym !
As well to die ! Youth is the time—our youth,
To think and to decide on a great course :
Age with its action follows ; but 'tis dreary
To have to alter one's whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone ! as well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right—not now !
I'd die as I have lived . . . too late to change !
Best die. Then if there's any fault, it will
Be smothered up : much best ! You'll be too busy
With your hereafter, you will have achieved
Too many triumphs to be always dwelling
Upon my downfall, Pym ? Poor little Laud
May dream his dream out of a perfect Church

In some blind corner? And there's no one left . . .

(He glances on the King.)

I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!

And yet . . . I know not! What if with this weak-
ness . . .

And I shall not be there . . . And he'll betray

His friends—if he has any . . . And he's false . . .

And loves the Queen, and . . .

Oh, my fate is nothing—

Nothing! But not that awful head . . . not that!

Pym, save the King! Pym, save him! Stay—you
shall . . .

For you love England! I, that am dying, think

What I must see . . . 'tis here . . . all here! My
God!

Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,

How Thou wilt plague him, satiating Hell!

What? England that you love—our land—become

A green and putrefying charnel, left

Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym—

Some who, without that, still must ever wear

A darkened brow, an over-serious look,

And never properly be young . . .

No word!

You will not say a word—to me—to Him!

(Turning to CHARLES.)

Speak to him . . . as you spoke to me . . . that day!

Nay, I will let you pray to him, my King—

Pray to him! He will kiss your feet, I know!

What if I curse you? Send a strong Curse forth

Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror, till

She's fit, with her white face, to walk the world

Scaring kind natures from your cause and you—

Then to sit down with you, at the board-head,

The gathering for prayer . . .

Vane. O speak, Pym! Speak!

Straf. . . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home—

You—you—you—be a nestling Care for each
To sleep with, hardly moaning in his dreams . . .

She gnaws so quietly . . . until he starts—

Gets off with half a heart eaten away . . .

Oh you shall 'scape with less, if she's my child!

Vane (to Pym). We never thought of this . . . surely
not dreamed

Of this . . . it never can . . . could come to this!

Pym (after a pause). If England should declare her
will to me . . .

Straf. No—not for England, now—not for Heaven,
now . . .

See, Pym—for me! My sake! I kneel to you!

There . . . I will thank you for the death . . . my
friend,

This is the meeting . . . you will send me proud

To my chill grave! Dear Pym—I'll love you well!

Save him for me, and let me love you well!

Pym. England—I am thine own! Dost thou exact
That service? I obey thee to the end!

Straf. (as he totters out). O God, I shall die first—I
shall die first!

(*Curtain falls.*)

THE END.

Pippa Passes.
•
A DRAMA.

I DEDICATE
MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM, MOST ADMIRINGLY
TO THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"—
MOST AFFECTIONATELY TO
MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD
R. B.

Pippa Passes.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN.—*A large, mean, airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY !

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and supprest it lay—
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be supprest,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the
world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts above measure)
One of thy choices, or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks at thy
pleasure)

—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,

Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine minutes, coming, going,
In which, earth turns from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine ! But thou must treat me not
As the prosperous are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest ;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa—old-year's sorrow,
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow—
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy, one way, if another, less :
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven ;
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's !
Try, now ! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima ; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage ? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek ; how should she mind the storm ?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves ? 'Tis their marriage-day ;
And while they leave church, and go home their way
Hand clasping hand,—within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee !
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The Lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,

She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close,
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose
Receives them! And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard!
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!
And here I let time slip for nought!
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam—caught
With a single splash from my ewer!
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing—
Now grow together on the ceiling!
That will task your wits!
Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse

Thick red flame through that dusk green universe !

I am queen of thee, floweret ;

And each fleshy blossom

Preserve I not—(safer

Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom)

—From weevil and chafer ?

Laugh through my pane, then ; solicit the bee ;

Gibe him, be sure ; and, in midst of thy glee,

Love thy queen, worship me !

—Worship whom else ? For am I not, this day,

Whate'er I please ? What shall I please to-day ?

My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend my day ?

To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,

The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk :

But, this one day, I have leave to go,

And play out my fancy's fullest games ;

I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—

That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names

Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo !

See ! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the morning,

Some one shall love me, as the world calls love :

I am no less than Ottima, take warning !

The gardens, and the great stone house above,

And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,

Arc mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,

To court me, while old Luca yet reposes ;

And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,

I . . . what, now ?—give abundant cause for prate

About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,

Too bold, too confident she 'll still face down

The spitefullest of talkers in our town—

How we talk in the little town below !

But love, love, love—there's better love, I know !

This foolish love was only day's first offer ;
 I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :
 For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
 Out of Possagno church at noon ?
 Their house looks over Orcana valley—
 Why should I not be the bride as soon
 As Ottima ? For I saw, beside,
 Arrive last night that little bride—
 Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
 Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
 Blacker than all except the black eyelash ;
 I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses !
 —So strict was she, the veil
 Should cover close her pale
 Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
 Scarce touch, remember, Jules !—for are not such
 Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
 As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature ?
 A soft and easy life these ladies lead !
 Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed—
 Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
 Keep that foot its lady primness,
 Let those ancles never swerve
 From their exquisite reserve,
 Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
 All but naked to the knee !
 How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
 So startling as her real first infant kiss ?
 Oh, no—not envy, this !

—Not envy, sure !—for if you gave me
 Leave to take or to refuse,
 In earnest, do you think I'd choose
 That sort of new love to enslave me ?
 Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning
 As little fear of losing it as winning !

Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
 And only parents' love can last our lives :
 At eve the son and mother, gentle pair,
 Commune inside our Turret ; what prevents
 My being Luigi ? while that mossy lair
 Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred
 With each to each imparting sweet intents
 For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
 (For I observe of late, the evening walk
 Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
 Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
 Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
 Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
 And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm ;
 Let me be Luigi ! . . . If I only knew
 What was my mother's face—my father, too !

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
 Is God's ; then why not have God's love befall
 Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,
 Monsignor ?—who to-night will bless the home
 Of his dead brother ; and God will bless in turn
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
 With love for all men : I, to-night at least,
 Would be that holy and beloved priest !

Now wait !—even I already seem to share
 In God's love : what does New-year's hymn declare ?
 What other meaning do these verses bear ?

*All service ranks the same with God :
 If now, as formerly He trod
 Paradise, His presence fills
 Our earth, each only as God wills
 Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
 Are we ; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not "a small event!" Why "small?"
 Costs it more pain than this, ye call
 A "great event," should come to pass,
 Than that? Untwine me from the mass
 Of deeds which make up life, one deed
 Power shall fall short in, or exceed!*

And more of it, and more of it!—oh, yes—
 I will pass by, and see their happiness,
 And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
 A pretty thing to care about
 So mightily, this single holiday!

But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
 Down the grass-path grey with dew,
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
 Where the swallow never flew
 As yet, nor cicale dared carouse—
 Dared carouse!

[*She enters the street.*]

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.

*Seb. (sings.) Let the watching lids wink!
 Day's a-blaze with eyes, think—
 Deep into the night, drink!*

Otti. Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights,
 perhaps;

But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink,
 —We call such light, the morning's: let us see!
 Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
 Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice—
 Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
 It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course

The slide-bolt catches.—Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be!

Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day—I observed that, as I strolled
On mornings thro' the vale here; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook—
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills—
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye—
And wisely—you were plotting one thing there,
Nature, another outside: I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light;
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed
And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife!"
This house was his, this chair, this window—his!

Otti. Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark's:
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
Should lie . . . There's Padua, plain enough, that blue!
Look o'er my shoulder—follow my finger—

Seb. Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added:
Where's dew? where's freshness? That bruised plant, I
bruised

In getting thro' the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark
In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh shut the lattice, pray!

Seb. Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be—

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, Ottima? There—curse
The world, and all outside! Let us throw off
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's out

With all of it !

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"
And nothing more. Notice—I'll say them now,
"His blood."

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent ? who should repent, or why ?
What puts that in your head ? Did I once say
That I repented ?

Otti. No—I said the deed—

Seb. "The deed," and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant !
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are—

Otti. Here is the wine—
I brought it when we left the house above—
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black ? white,
then ?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat ? What are you ?

Otti. There, trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet—always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry ;
I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used—
Now—so has that dumb figure fastened on me—
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald ?

Seb. No—the white wine—the white wine !
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way,

Nor does it rise : pour on ! To your black eyes !
Do you remember last damned New Year's day ?

Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at
them

Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.

Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face !

Otti. 'Do you
Fondle me, then ! who means to take your life
For that, my Schald ?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima,
One thing's to guard against. We'll not make much
One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday—as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof was needed now, now first,
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you
In spite of Luca and what 's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all !
We 'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other—were not tied
By this—conceive you ?

Otti. Love—

Seb. Not tied so sure—

Because tho' I was wrought upon—have struck
His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours?—therefore, forever yours ?

Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
Should we have—months ago—when first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that

Suddenly—

Seb. "A thing" . . . there again—"a thing!"

Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
In poring now upon it? For 'tis here—
As much as there in the deserted house—
You cannot rid your eyes of it: for me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse—I hate—
Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, I hate you worse
Luca, than—

Seb. Off, off; take your hands off mine!
'Tis the hot evening—off! oh, morning, is it?

Otti. There's one thing must be done—you know what
thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

Seb. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him: he is turned by this
Off from his face, beside, as you will see.

Otti. This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way!

Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing?—Kill the world
So Luca lives again!—Ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me dispatch my business and begone,
I would—

Otti. See !

Seb. No, I'll finish ! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all ?
All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer—there 's a recompense in guilt ;
One must be venturous and fortunate—
What is one young for, else ? In age we'll sigh
O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown over ;
Still we have lived ! The vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way ?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music—starving while you plucked me
These flowers to smell !

Otti. My poor lost friend !

Seb. He gave me
Life—nothing less : what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right ? What was to wonder at ?
He sate by us at table quietly—
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touch'd ?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike me ?
'Tis not for the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out—undone !
And you—O, how feel you ? feel you for me ?

Otti. Well, then—I love you better now than ever—
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime—nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime ; this naked crime o. ours
May not, now, be looked over—look it down, then !
Great ? let it be great—but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price ? Come—they or it !
Speak not ! The past, would you give up the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you—
 The garden's silence—even the single bee
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt
 And where he hid you only could surmise
 By some campanula's chalice set a-swing
 As he clung there—"Yes, I love you!"

Seb.

And I drew

Back; put far back your face with both my hands
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,
 Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Seb.

When

I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
 Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
 To a yellow haze?

Otti.

Ah—my sign was, the sun

Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
 Nipt by the first frost.

Seb.

You would always laugh

At my wet boots—I had to stride thro' grass
 Over my ankles.

Otti. Then our crowning night—

Seb. The July night?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald!

When the heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
 Its black-blue canopy seemed let descend
 Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
 And smother up all life except our life.
 So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came!

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
 Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
 And ever and anon some bright white shaft
 Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof—here burnt and there,

As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me : then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes !

Otti. —While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you—

Seb. Slower, Ottima—

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently ! Love me—
Forgive me—take not words—mere words—to heart—
Your breath is worse than wine ! Breathe slow, speak
slow—

Do not lean on me—

Otti. Sebald, as we lay, ‘
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, “ Let death come now—’tis right to die !
Right to be punished—nought completes such bliss
But woe ! ” Who said that ?

Seb. How did we ever rise ?
Was't that we slept ? Why did it end ?

Otti. I felt you,
Fresh tapering to a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips—
(My hair is fallen now—knot it again !)

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now, and now !
This way ? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen ?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow ;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that !

Seb. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent—

(*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn ;
Morning's at seven ;
The hill-side's dew-pearled :
The lark's on the wing ;
The snail's on the thorn ;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world !*

(*PIPPA passes.*)

Seb. God's in his heaven ! Do you hear that ? Who spoke ?

You, you spoke !

Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl !

She must have rested on the step—we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.

Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside ?

There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.

She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh !

She does not hear—you call out louder !

Seb.

Leave me !

Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders !

Otti.

Sebald ?

Seb. Wipe off that paint. I hate you !

Otti.

Miserable !

Seb. My God ! and she is emptied of it now !

Outright now !—how miraculously gone

All of the grace—had she not strange grace once ?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,

Only the cloven brow and puckered chin

Stay in their places—and the very hair,

That seemed to have a sort of life in it,

Drops, a dead web !

Otti. Speak to me—speak not of me !

Seb. —That round great full-orbed face, where not an
angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken !

Otti. To me—not of me !—ungrateful, perjured cheat—

A coward, too—but ingrate's worse than all !

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie !

Leave me !—betray me !—I can see your drift—

A lie that walks, and eats, and drinks !

Seb. My God !

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-blades—

I should have known there was no blood beneath !

Otti. You hate me, then ? You hate me then ?

Seb. To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,

And fascinate by sinning ; and show herself

Superior—Guilt from its excess, superior

To Innocence. That little peasant's voice

Has righted all again. Though I be lost,

I know which is the better, never fear,

Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,

Nature, or trick—I see what I have done,

Entirely now ! Oh, I am proud to feel

Such torments—let the world take credit thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its price !

I hate, hate—curse you ! God's in his heaven !

Otti. —Me !

Me ! no, no, Sebald—not yourself—kill me !

Mine is the whole crime—do but kill me—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak—

I always meant to kill myself—wait, you !

Lean on my breast—not as a breast ; don't love me

The more because you lean on me, my own

Heart's Sebald ! There—there—both deaths presently !

Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned : all I
feel

Is . . . is at swift-recurring intervals,
 A hurrying-down within me, as of waters
 Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit—
 There they go—whirls from a black, fiery sea !
Otti. Not to me, God—to him be merciful !

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hill-side to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the House of JULES, a young French Statuary.

1st Student. Attention ! my own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter ? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his^e bride when the jest's found out.

2nd Stud. All here ! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him ! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino ! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too ; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all—whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me—"Here a mammoth-poem lies,—Fouled to death by butterflies." His own fault, the simpleton ! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs : Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phæbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3d Stud. Subside, my fine fellow ! If the marriage

was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2d Stud. Good!—Only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy—Giovacchino!

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and bye: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came singly from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone, indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers!—So he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters, now, you call his . . . I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone,

and the world's women beside him, in flesh ; these being as much below, as those, above—his soul's aspiration : but now he is to have the real." . . . There you laugh again ! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm ! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody)—will Jules lose the bloom of his youth ?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world : look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time ; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue ? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on ! Has a man done wondering at women ?—There follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men ?—There's God to wonder at : and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again ! There, you see ! Well, this—Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day ! Canova's gallery—you know : there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye : all at once he stops full at the *Priche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty ? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you !" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his

very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Stud. Tell him about the women—go on to the women!

1st Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek—girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it—a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long—(Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely). And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three

times a day, to receive and dispatch ! I concocted the main of it : relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united ? St—st—Here they come !

6th Stud. Both of them ! Heaven's love, speak softly ! speak within yourselves !

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom ! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it ! and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in !

2d Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy !—rich, that your face may the better set it off !

6th Stud. And the bride ! Yes, sure enough, our Phene ! Should you have known her in her clothes ? How magnificently pale ! •

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope ?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is ! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules ?

Gott. How he gazes on her ! Pity—pity !

1st Stud. They go in—now, silence ! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate—just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated !

II.—*Noon. Over Orcana. The House of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE—she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene—I am yours now—you
Are mine now—let fate reach me how she likes,
If you'll not die—so, never die ! Sit here—

My work-room's single seat : I over-lean
 This length of hair and lustrous front—they turn
 Like an entire flower upward—eyes—lips—last
 Your chin—no, last your throat turns—'tis their scent
 Pulls down my face upon you ! Nay, look ever
 This one way till I change, grow you—I could
 Change into you, beloved !

You by me,

And I by you—this is your hand in mine—
 And side by side we sit : all's true. Thank God !
 I have spoken—speak, you !

—O, my life to come !

My Tydeus must be carved, that's there in clay ;
 Yet how be carved, with you about the chamber ?
 Where must I place you ? When I think that once
 This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
 Without you ! Shall I ever work again—
 Get fairly into my old ways again—
 Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
 My hand transfers its lineaments to stone ?
 Will my mere fancies live near you, my truth—
 The live truth—passing and repassing me—
 Sitting beside me ?

Now speak !

Only, first,

See, all your letters ! Was 't not well contrived ?
 Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe ; she keeps
 Your letters next her skin : which drops out foremost ?
 Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
 Into my world !

Again those eyes complete

Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
 Of all my room holds ; to return and rest
 On me, with pity, yet some wonder too—
 As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
 And this were the one moment of surprise

And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
 O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy !
 What gaze you at ? Those ? Books, I told you of ;
 Let your first word to me rejoice them, too :
 This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
 Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
 Read' this line . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
 First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl !
 My Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
 With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
 To mark great places with due gratitude ;
 " *He said, and on Antinous directed*
 " *A bitter shaft*" . . . a flower blots out the rest !
 Again upon your search ? My statues, then !
 —Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
 When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
 Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
 This, rather, turn to ! What, unrecognised ?
 I thought you would have seen that here you sit
 As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
 Naked upon her bright Numidian horse !
 Recall you this, then ? " Carve in bold relief"—
 So you commanded—" carve, against I come,
 " A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
 ' Feasting, bay-filletted and thunder-free,
 ' Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch :
 ' " *Praise those who slew Hipparchus,*" cry the guests, .
 " " *While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves*
 " " *As erst above our champions' : stand up, all !*"
 See, I have laboured to express your thought !
 Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
 (Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
 Only consenting at the branches' end
 They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole race—
 The Praiser's—in the centre—who with eyes
 Sightless, so bend they back to light inside

His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn !
But you must say a "well" to that—say, "well !"
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet ?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence ! why before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art :
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human Archetype—
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved becwise o'er its bough ; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves—and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang !
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities !
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom ;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world : but marble !—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the Earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked ;
Refine it off to air, you may—condense it
Down to the diamond ;—is not metal there,

When o'er the sudden specks my chisel trips?
 —Not flesh—as flake off flake I scale, approach,
 Lay bare those blueish veins of blood asleep?
 Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
 By the swift implement sent home at once,
 Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
 About its track?—

Phene? what—why is this?
 That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes!
 Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end's coming—to be sure, it must
 Have ended sometime! Tush—why need I speak
 Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
 One half of it, besides; and do not care
 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
 Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
 To say the words Natalia made me learn,
 To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
 Where your voice lifted me, by letting it
 Proceed—but can it? Even you, perhaps,
 Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
 The music's life, and me along with that—
 No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we are
 —Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!
 If I could look for ever up to them,
 As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
 All memory of wrong done or suffering borne,
 Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
 Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay
 —Never to overtake the rest of me,
 All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
 Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
 Not so the shame and suffering; but they sink,

Are left, I rise above them—Keep me so
Above the world !

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered ! Stay—" I love you, love you " . . .
I could prevent it if I understood
More of your words to me—was't in the tone
Or the words, your power ?

Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you ! Only, change
No more, and I shall find it presently
—Far back here, in the brain*yourself filled up.
Natalia threatened me that harm would follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like us are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low ;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of this world
And make of God their tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know !
But no—Natalia said they were your friends,
And they assented while they smiled the more,
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
With light, lank hair seemed leader of the rest ;
He held a paper—" What we want," said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—
" Is something slow, involved and mystical,
" To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
" And lure him on, so that, at innermost
" Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this !
" —As in the apple's core, the noisome fly :

"For insects on the rind are seen at once,
 "And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
 "Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
 And so he read what I have got by heart—
 I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I am yours” . . .
 Stop—is not that, or like that, part of words
 Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
 What cost much pains to learn! Is this more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,
 In my brain, as poor a creature too—
 No end to all I cannot do!
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man, or hate a man
 Supremely: thus my love began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In its loveliest spot to abide,
 And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
 I found Hate dwelling beside.
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
 And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
 In its hatefullest nook to dwell;
 But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
 Where the deepest shadow fell.
 (The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
 Not the painter's lip should tell!)*

"And here," said he, "Jules probably will ask,
 "You have black eyes, love,—you are, sure enough,
 "My peerless bride,—so do you tell, indeed,
 "What needs some explanation—what means this?"
 —And I am to go on, without a word—
*So I grew wiser in Love and Hate,
 From simple, that I was of late.
 For once, when I loved, I would enface*

*Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
 Of her I loved, in one embrace—
 As if by mere love I could love immensely !
 And when I hated, I would plunge
 My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
 My foe's whole life out, like a sponge—
 As if by mere hate I could hate intensely !
 But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
 How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion,
 And if I see cause to love more, or hate more
 That ever man loved, ever hated, before—
 And seek in the Valley of Love,
 The spot, or the spot in Hate's Grove,
 Where my soul may the sureliest reach
 The essence, nought less, of each,
 The Hate of all Hates, or the Love
 Of all Loves, in its Valley or Grove,—
 I find them the very warders
 Each of the other's borders.
 I love most, when Love is disguised
 In Hate ; and when Hate is surprized
 In Love, then I hate most : ask
 How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
 Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
 And how, having hated thee,
 I sought long and painfully
 To wound thee, and not prick
 The skin, but pierce to the quick—
 Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
 By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate !*

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche—who else ? But all of them, no doubt,
 Hated me : they at Venice—presently
 Their turn, however ! You I shall not meet :

If I dreamed, saying this would wake me !

What's here, this gold—we cannot meet again, Keep
 Consider—and the money was but meant
 For two years' travel, which is over now,
 All chance, or hope, or care, or need of it !
 This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
 And books, and medals, except . . . let them go
 Together, so the produce keeps you safe,
 Out of Natalia's clutches !—If by chance
 (For all's chance here) I should survive the gang
 At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
 We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide—

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing —
Give her but a least excuse to love me !
When—where—
How—can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me ?
(" Hist"—said Kate the queen ;
But " Oh—" cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
" 'Tis only a page that carols unseen
" Crumbling your hounds their messes !")

Is she wronged ?—To the rescue of her honour,
My heart !
Is she poor ?—What costs it to be styled a donour ?
Merely an earth's to cleave, a sea's to part !
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her !
(" Nay, list,"—bade Kate the queen ;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
" 'Tis only a page that carols unseen
" Fitting your hawks their jesses !") (PIPPA passes.)

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth ?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
 The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
 At Asolo, where still the peasants keep
 Her memory; and songs tell how many a page
 Pined for the grace of one so far above
 His power of doing good to, as a queen—
 "She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
 "For him to help her!"

Yes, a bitter thing
 To see our lady above all need of us;
 Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
 But the world looks so. If whoever loves
 Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
 The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
 Why should we always choose the page's part?
 Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
 I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,
 Like my own Psyche's,—fresh upon her lips
 Alit, the visionary butterfly,
 Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
 Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
 This body had no soul before, but slept
 Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
 From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
 Fastened their image on its passiveness:
 Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
 Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
 Be art—and, further, to evoke a soul
 From form, be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save
 A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
 Without me, from their laughter!—Oh, to hear
 God's voice, plain as I heard it first, before

They broke in with that laughter ! I heard them
Henceforth, not God !

To Ancona—Greece—some isle !
I wanted silence only—there is clay
Every where. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art—the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream !
Who—what is Lutwyche—what Natalin's friends,
What the whole world except our love—my own,
Own Phene ? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it ? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin art afresh. Shall I meet Lutwyche,
And save him from my statue's meeting him ?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
Like a god going thro' his world there stands
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow—
And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now !
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
Some unsuspected isle in far off seas !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to
the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loiter-
ing with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in
view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl
who passed us singing ? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's

* "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and
sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

money shall be honestly earned :—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business—we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors—we know that he is a saint and all that a Bishop should be, who is a great man besides. *Oh! were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions ; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian — for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there,) you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription ; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all ; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity, — 'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, L'erio!*) and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past you'll say—“*How Moses hocus-pocust Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam,*”—in no wise! “*Shackabrach—Bouch—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cci-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen goods!*” So talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With fool for both world's under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, and never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant thro' you, or this

Bishop through his Intendant — I possess a burning pocket-full of *swanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while—not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2d Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour—wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having^o bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts: never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with?—one could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to—*Pamurge consults Hertrippa—Reliev'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2d Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *swanziger*! Leave this fooling, and look out—the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3d Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2d Pol. Flourish all round—"put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirt on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once," why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really

for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well ; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect—the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct—we arrest him at once—to-morrow comes Venice—and presently, Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal sure enough ! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—*Evening. Inside the Turret. LUIGI and his Mother entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing.

The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway ?

Mother.

Oh no, no—in farther,

Where the echo is made—on the ridge.

Luigi.

Here surely, then.

How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up !

Hark—" *Lucius Junius !*" The very ghost of a voice,
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those ?
Mere withered wall-flowers, waving overhead ?

They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair

Who lean out of their topmost fortress—looking

And listening, mountain men, to what we say,

Hands under chin of each grave earthy face :

Up and show faces all of you !—" *All of you !*"

That's the king's dwarf with the scarlet comb : now
hark—

Come down and meet your fate ! Hark—" *Meet your fate !*"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
Go to his City ! putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned—

Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush ! say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A's and B's write for effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent—you hear each petty injury—
None of his daily virtues ; he is old,
Quiet, and kind, and densely stupid—why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves ?

Luigi. • They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed ; now, if A. tried and failed
I could not teach that : mine's the lesser task.
Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi ?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are ? •

Luigi. Why not ? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself : at times—nay, even as now
We sit, I think my mind is touched—suspect
All is not sound : but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise ?
I know I am thus—so all is right again !
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering ; then I ponder—" I am rich,
" Young, healthy ; why should this fact trouble me,
" More than it troubles these ? " But it does trouble me !
No—trouble's a bad word—for as I walk
There's springing and melody and giddiness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my youth—
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves—
Return to me—whatever may amuse me,
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,
The very cicalas laugh " There goes he, and there !

"Feast him, the time is short—he is on his way
 "For the world's sake—feast him this once, our friend!"
 And in return for all this, I can trip
 Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps: I go
 This evening, mother!

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
 Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him.

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust your judgment, then, of the mere
 means

Of this wild enterprise: say you are right,—
 How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
 What would require a cool head, a cold heart,
 And a calm hand? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape—to even wish that, would spoil all!
 The dying is best part of it. Too much
 Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
 To leave myself excuse for longer life—
 Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
 That I might finish with it ere my fellows
 Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay?
 I was put at the board-head, helped to all
 At first: I rise up happy and content.
 God must be glad one loves his world so much—
 I can give news of earth to all the dead
 Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars
 That had a right to come first and see elb
 The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
 Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
 That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
 Impatient of the azure—and that day
 In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
 May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer nights—
 Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me! 'Tis true.—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
 Environ my devotedness as quaintly
 As round about some antique altar wreath
 The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

Mother. See now : you reach the city—you must cross
 His threshold—how ?

Luigi. Oh, that's if we conspired !
 Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
 But guess not how the qualities required
 For such an office—qualities I have—
 Would little stead me otherwise employed,
 Yet prove of rarest merit here—here only.
 Every one knows for what his excellence
 Will serve, but no one ever will consider
 For what his worst defect might serve ; and yet
 Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
 In search of a distorted ash?—it happens
 The wry spoilt branch's a natural perfect bow !
 Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
 Arriving at the palace on my errand !
 No, no—I have a handsome dress packed up —
 White satin here, to set off my black hair—
 In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
 Behind thick walls—make friends there to betray you ;
 More than one man spoils everything. March straight -
 Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for—
 Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
 Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all
 Inside the Turret here a hundred times—
 Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe,
 But where they cluster thickest is the door
 Of doors ; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab
 Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
 Whence he is bound and what's his business now—
 Walk in—straight up to him—you have no knife—
 Be prompt, how should he scream ? Then, out with you !

Italy, Italy, my Italy !

You're free, you're free ! Oh mother, I could dream
They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gaultier from his grave !

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire ! He loves himself—and next, the world—
If he must love beyond,—but nought between :
As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi—ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with love—
I could not call you cruel or unkind !

Once more, your ground for killing him !—then go !

Luigi. Now do you ask me, or make sport of me ?
How first the Austrians got these provinces—
(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)

. . . Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .

Mother.

Well ?

Luigi.

(Sure he's arrived,

The tell-tale cuckoo—spring's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes !)

Or . . . better go at once to modern times—
He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand
But can't re-state the matter ; that's my boast ;
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.

Mother.

Why go to-night ?

Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-star," God
saith—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-star !"
The gift of the morning-star—have I God's gift
Of the morning-star ?

Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.
Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who live through
June !

Great noontides, thunder storms, all glaring pomps
Which triumph at the heels of sovereign June
Leading his glorious revel thro' our world.
Yes, Chiara will be here—

Mother. In June—remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming—

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo ?

Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise :
In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso—there, again !

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—)

*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now :
And the king's locks curled
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn
Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born :
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
From age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(The Gods so loved him while he dreamed,)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.*

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die !

*[From without.] Among the rocks his city was :
 Before his palace, in the sun,
 He sate to see his people pass,
 And judge them every one
 From its threshold of smooth stone.
 They haled him many a valley-thief
 Caught in the sheep-pens—robber-chief,
 Swarthy and shameless—beggar-cheat—
 Spy-prowler—or rough pirate found
 On the sea-sand left aground ;
 And sometimes clung about his feet,
 With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
 A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
 Of one with sullen thickset brows :
 And sometimes from the prison-house
 The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
 Who through some chink had pushed and pressed,
 On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
 Worm-like into the temple,—caught
 At last there by the very God
 Who ever in the darkness strode
 Backward and forward, keeping watch
 O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch !
 And these, all and every one,
 The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the sun !

*[From without.] His councillors, on left and right,
 Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
 Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,
 Where the very blue had turned to white.
 'Tis said, a Python scared one day
 The breathless city, till he came,
 With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
 Where the old king sate to judge alway ;
 But when he saw the sweepy hair,*

*Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the God will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Beholding this, he did not dare,
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun!*

(PIPPA passes.)

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the world ends!

The Python in the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,
Lurks in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won, in this late trial,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'Tis God's voice calls, how could I stay? Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Turret
to the Bishop's brother's House, close to the Duomo S.
Maria. Poor Girls sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout
sea-farer!

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish; you, wish first!

2d Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.

3d Girl. That old . . . somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,

To be let eat my supper quietly—
 Since had he not himself been late this morning
 Detained at—never mind where, —had he not . . .
 “Eh, baggage, had I not!”—

2d Girl. How she can lie!

3d Girl. Look there—by the nails—

2d Girl. What makes your fingers red?

3d Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words
 with,

On the bright table—how he laughed!

1st Girl. My turn:

Spring's come and summer's coming: I would wear
 A long loose gown--down to the feet and hands—
 With plaits here, close about the throat, all day:
 And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed—
 And have new milk to drink—apples to eat,
 Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . . ah, I should
 say,

This is away in the fields—miles!

3d Girl. Say at once

You'd be at home—she'd always be at home!
 Now comes the story of the farm among
 The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
 White blossoms on her as she ran: why, fool,
 They've rubbed out the chalk-mark of how tall you were,
 Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
 Made a dunghill of your garden—

1st Girl. They, destroy

My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!
 I would have done so—so I hope they have!
 A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall—
 They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
 It must have been there long ere I was born;
 Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
 Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
 And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,

And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.

3d Girl. How her mouth twitches ! Where was I ?—
before

She broke in with her wishes and long gowns

And wasps—would I be such a fool !—Oh, here !

This is my way—I answer every one

Who asks me why I make so much of him—

(If you say, you love him—straight “ he'll not be gulled ”)

“ He that seduced me when I was a girl

Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,

Brown, red, white,”—as life case may be—that pleases !

(See how that beetle burnishes in the path—

There sparkles he along the dust ! and, there—

Your journey to that maize-tuft's spoil at least !)

1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed
one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend

Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

2d Girl. When you were young ? Nor are you young,
that's true !

How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away !

Why, I can span them ! Cecco beats you still ?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.

I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair

Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,

Than black—the men say they are sick of black,

Black eyes, black hair !

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough !

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys

And ortolans ? Giovita, of the palace,

Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me

Polenta with a knife that has cut up

An ortolan.

2d Girl. Why, there ! is not that, Pippa

We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—

Where the lights are ?

1st Girl. No—or she would sing ;
—For the Intendant said . . .

3d Girl. Oh, you sing first—
Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I'll tell you,
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun !

2d Girl. [*Sings.*]

You'll love me yet !—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing ;
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now—some seed
At least is sure to strike
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like !

You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet :
Your look ?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death ?—You'll love me yet !

3d Girl. [*To PIPPA who approaches.*] Oh, you may
come closer—we shall not eat you ! Why, you seem the
very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has
fallen so violently in love with ! I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—*Night. The Palace by the Duomo. MONSIGNOR,*
dismissing his Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks. I chiefly desire
life now, that I may recompense every one of you.
Most I know something of already. What, a repast
prepared ? *Benedicto benedicatur . . . ugh . . . ugh !*
Where was I ? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the
weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather,—but I am a
Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here : To be
sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests

used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however: are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother—fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3rd of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back—they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3rd of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor, I did my utmost to advance, that the church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of art; here's his letter,—“I never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals—and, in the very perfection he

has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure—his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit : there is but one method of escape—confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,”—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio : how think you, Ugo ?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter ?

Mon. Foolish Jules ! and yet, after all, why foolish ? He may—probably will, fail egregiously ; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet, now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them ; eh, Ugo ? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo !

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours : first, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls : and now then ? Let this farce, this chatter end now—what is it you want with me ?

Mon. Ugo . . .

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what ?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here : if once you set me coughing, Ugo !—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess : now ask me what for ! what service I did him—ask me !

Mon. I had better not—I should rip up old disgraces—let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, if I forgot to observe, is your true name) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs he—for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp! Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under Heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stay the consequences of his crime; and not one *solito* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sack-cloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant, by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderes* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may

beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No . . . if my cough would but allow me to speak !

Inten. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Mon.—Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in! How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. “Forgive us our trespasses”—

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps: shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less, keep others out. No—I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of that infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old

story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and that heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes, and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly--the child is always ready to produce--as you say--howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity (which happens commonly thrice a year). If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop--you!

Mon. I see thro' the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once; all shall be sifted, however--seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death--let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you--the girl--here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak--know nothing of her or me! I see her every day--saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither--have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a

certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned, English knave I and the Police employ occasionally.—You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of m's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her! 'Tis as well settled once and for ever: some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*Over-head the tree-tops meet—
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet—
There was nought above me, and nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know!
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words—our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun!
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the Seven and One,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me!* (PIPPA passes.)

* Mon. [*Springing up.*] My people—one and all—
all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and
foot! He dares—I know not half he dares—but

remove him—quick ! *Miserere mei, Domine!* quick,
I say !

PIPPA'S Chamber again. *She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in its tomb,
Wile winter away ;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they ?
Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my Zanze—
“ Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze ”—
The summer of life's so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away !
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they ?
No bidding me then to . . . what did she say ?
“ Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
“ More like . . . (what said she ?)—and less like canoes—”
How pert that girl was !—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women ! it had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me :
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of English-coloured hair, at all events.
Well—if old Luca keeps his good intents,
We shall do better : see what next year brings !
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you, perhaps, next year !
Bluph . . . something ! I had caught the uncouth name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours ; it were, indeed, a serious matter

If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah, but—ah, but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air ;
Best people are not angels quite—
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devils ; so there's that proud look to spare !
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind ! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor !
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi !—how that Luigi started
Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he past just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I ?—tired of fooling !
Day for folly, night for schooling !
New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content !
Even my lily's asleep, I vow :
Wake up—here's a friend I've pluckt you !
See—call this flower a heart's-ease now !
And something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this—with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen,
While the leaves and parts that witness
The old proportions and their fitness
Here remain, unchanged unmoved now—
So call this pampered thing improved now !
Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—

"Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
 Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
 I have made her gorge polenta
 Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
 As her . . . name there's no pronouncing !
 See this heightened colour too—
 For she swilled Breganze wine
 Till her nose turned deep carmine—
 'Twas but white when wild she grew !
 And only by this Zanze's eyes
 Of which we could not change the size,
 The magnitude of what's achieved
 Otherwise, may be perceived !"

Oh what a drear, dark close to my poor day !
 How could that red sun drop in that black cloud !
 Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
 Dispensed with, never more to be allowed,
 Day's turn is over—now arrives the night's—
 Oh, Lark, be day's apostle
 To mavis, merle and thristle,
 Bid them their betters jostle
 From day and its delights !
 But at night, brother Howlet, far over the woods,
 Toll the world to thy chantry—
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
 Full complines with galantry—
 Then, owls and bats, crows and twats,
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like really to know :
 How near I ever might approach all these
 I only fancied being, this long day—
 —Approach, I mean, so as to touch them—so
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[Sitting on the bedside.

And border Ottima's cloak's hem—
Ah, me and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose !
True in some sense or other, I suppose,
Though I passed by them all, and felt no sign.

[As she lies down.

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.
*All service is the same with God—
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we : there is no last nor first.—*

[She sleeps.

King Victor and King Charles.

A TRAGEDY.

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistical consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences ;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularising : since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (tolerable accounts of which are to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's *Letters from Italy*). —I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the details of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will, of Charles—the noble and right woman's-manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.

King Victor and King Charles.

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia

CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of Piedmont.

POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.

D'ORMEA, Minister.

SCENE.—The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left and another to the right of the stage.

TIME, 1730-1.

FIRST YEAR 1730.—KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Cha. You think so? Well, I do not.

Pol. My beloved,

All must clear up—we shall be happy yet :

This cannot last for ever . . . oh, may change

To-day, or any day !

Cha. —May change? Ah yes—

May change !

Pol. Endure it, then.

Cha. No doubt, a life

Like this drags on, now better and now worse ;

My father may . . . may take to loving me ;

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And he may take, too, D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him ;—may even cast off her
—That bad Sebastian ; but he also may
. . . Or, no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?

Pol. Now, force me
From you !—me, close by you as if there gloomed
No D'Ormeas, no Sebastians on our path—
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me !

Cha. Because I felt as sure; as I feel sure
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
By the world's business that engrossed so much
My father and my brother : if I peered
From out my privacy,—amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two ;
'Twas war, peace—France our foe, now—England,
friend—

In love with Spain—at feud with Austria !—Well—
I wondered—laughed a moment's laugh for pride
In the chivalrous couple—then let drop
My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—
When . . .

Pol. You have told me, Charles.

Cha. Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that !
Just so much sunshine as the cottager's child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother . . . had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured !—not like me !

Pol. I know—

Cha. And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 317

My neck,—they bade me rise, “for I was heir
 To the Duke,” they said, “the right hand of the Duke;”
 Till then he was my father, not the Duke !
 So . . let me finish . . the whole intricate
 World’s-business their dead boy was born to, I
 Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
 I, of a sudden, must be : my faults, my follies,
 —All bitter truths were told me, all at once
 To end the sooner. What I simply styled
 Their overlooking me, had been contempt :
 How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
 With such an one while lordly Philip rode
 By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
 And must put up with—me ! ’Twas sad enough
 To learn my future portion and submit—
 And then the wear and worry, blame on blame !
 —For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,
 How could I but grow dizzy in their pent
 Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother’s look
 As they discussed my insignificance—
 (She and my father, and I sitting by,)—
 I bore :—I knew how brave a son they missed :
 Philip had gaily passed state-papers o’er,
 While Charles was spelling at them painfully !
 But Victor was my father spite of that.
 “Duke Victor’s entire life has been,” I said,
 “Innumerable efforts to one end ;
 “And, on the point now of that end’s success,
 “Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
 “Where’s time to be reminded ’tis his child
 “He spurns?” And so I suffered . . yet scarce suffered,
 Since I had you at length !

Pol. —To serve in place
 Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles.

Cha. But, once that crown obtained, then was’t not
 like

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Our lot would alter?—"When he rests, takes breath,
 "Glances around, and sees who's left to love—
 "Now that my mother's dead, sees I am left—
 "Is it not like he'll love me at the last?"

Well: Savoy turns Sardinia—the Duke's King!
 Could I—precisely then—could you expect
 His harshness to redouble? These few months
 Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena, do you
 And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
 What would he have? What is't they want with me?
 Him with this mistress and this minister,
 —You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
 Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!

Pol. Endure, endure, beloved! Say you not
 That he's your Father? All's so incident
 To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
 Or you'll acquire his kingcraft, or he'll find
 Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
 I bear this—not that there's so much to bear—

Cha. You hear it? don't I know that you, tho' bound
 To silence for my sake, are perishing
 Piecemeal beside me? and how otherwise?
 —When every creephole from the hideous Court
 Is stopt; the Minister to dog me, here—
 The Mistress posted to entrap you, there!
 And thus shall we grow old in such a life—
 Not careless,—never estranged,—but old: to alter
 Our life, there is so much to alter!

Pol. Come—
 Is it agreed that we forego complaints
 Even at Turin, yet complain we here
 At Rivoli? 'Twere wiser you announced
 Our presence to the King. What's now a-fout,
 I wonder?—Not that any more's to dread
 Than every day's embarrassment—but guess,
 For me, why train so fast succeeded train

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 319

On the high-road, each gayer still than each ;
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross ; such pomp
Bodes . . what now, Charles ? Can you conceive ?

Cha.

Not I.

Pol. A matter of some moment—

Cha.

There's our life !

Which of the group of loiterers that stared
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it ?

Pol.

Tush !

D'Ormea's contrivance !

Cha.

Ay—how otherwise

Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil ?
—So that the simplest courtier may remark,
'Twere idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-stock !
Something, 'tis like, about that weary business

[Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which

POLYXENA examines.]

—Not that I comprehend three words, of course,
After all last night's study.

Pol.

The faint heart !

Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
Its substance . . (that's the folded speech I mean,
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs . .)
—What would you have ?—I fancied while you spoke,
Some tones were just your father's.

Cha.

Flattery !

Pol. I fancied so :—and here lurks, sure enough,
My note upon the Spanish Claims ! You've mastered
The fief-speech thoroughly—this other, mind,
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,
Best read it slowly over once to me ;

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Read—there's bare time ; you read it firmly—loud
—Rather loud—looking in his face,—don't sink
Your eye once—ay, thus ! “ If Spain claims . . . ” begin
—Just as you look at me !

Cha. At you ! Oh, truly,
You have, I seen, say, marshalling your troops—
Dismissing councils—or, through doors ajar,
Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
Seemed possible again ! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from,
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,
Or, worse, the clipt grey hair and dead white face,
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
Which D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the KING's apartment*
D'ORMEA.]

. . . I said he would divert

My kisses from your brow !

D'O. [*Aside.*] Here ! So King Victor
Spoke truth for once ; and who's ordained, but I,
To make that memorable ? Both in call,
As he declared ! Were't better gnash the teeth,
Or laugh outright now ?

Cha. [*to Pol.*] What's his visit for ?

D'O. [*Aside.*] I question if they'll even speak to me.

Pol. [*to Cha.*] Face D'Ormea, he'll suppose you fear
him, else.

[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command, no
doubt.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Precisely !—If I threatened him, perhaps ?
Well, this at least is punishment enough !

Men used to promise punishment would come.

Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis !

D'O. [*Aside.*]

Ah—

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So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince,
Before you see your father—just one word
Of counsel!

Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly—
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!
Well, sir? Be brief, however!

D'O. What? you know
As much as I?—preceded me, most like,
In knowledge? So! ('Tis in his eye, beside--
His voice—he knows it and his heart's on flame
Already!) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus?

Cha. Is the Prince used to know,
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task—I feel
Your presence—(smile not)—thro' the walls, and take
Fresh heart. The King's within that chamber?

D'O. [*Passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims,*
as he glances at it,] "Spain!"

Pol. [*Aside to Cha.*] Tatry awhile: what ails the
minister?

D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble you.
The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—let that pass:
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!

Pol. [*to Cha.*] Surely you will listen!
—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up his vest?

Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

D'O. [*who has approached them, overlooks the other*
paper CHARLES continues to hold]

My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!
Sir, I must give you light upon those measures
—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,
Mine too!

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Cha. . . Release me ! Do you gloze on me
 Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
 You've made for me at Turin) your contempt ?
 —Your measures ?—When was any hateful task
 Not D'Ormea's imposition ? Leave my robe !
 What post can I bestow, what grant concede ?
 Or do you take me for the King ?

D'O.

Not I !

Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
 One, who in . . shall I say a year—a month ?
 Ay !—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
 In his Sardinia,—Europe's spectacle,
 And the world's bye-word ! What ? The Prince aggrieved
 That I've excluded him our counsels ? Here

[*Touching the paper in CHARLES's hand.*

Accept a method of extorting gold
 From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
 In silver first from tillers of the soil,
 Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
 To make up the amount—there's counsel, sir !
 My counsel, one year old ; and the fruit, this—
 Savoy's become a mass of misery
 And wrath, which one man has to meet—the King :
 You're not the King ! Another counsel, sir !
 Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
 Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King
 Thus much to baffle Spain ; he promises ;
 Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,
 Her offer follows ; and he promises . . .

Cha.—Promises, sir, when he before agreed
 To Austria's offer ?

D'O.

That's a counsel, Prince !

But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing
 To make their quarrel up between themselves
 Without the intervention of a friend)
 Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 323

Cha. How?

D'O. Prince, a counsel!—And the fruit of that?
Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
Together on their friend, blot out his name,
Abolish him from Europe. So take note,
Here's Austria and here's Spain to fight against,
And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
A miserable people mad with wrongs?
You're not the King!

Cha. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up— all does clear up to me!

D'O. Clears up? 'Tis no such thing to envy, then?
You see the King's state in its length and breadth?
You blame me, now, for keeping you aloof
From counsels and the fruit of counsels?—Wait
Till I've explained this morning's business!

Cha. [*Aside.*] No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—to D'Ormea, no;
—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!
I will do something,—but at least retain
The credit of my deed! [*Aloud.*] Then, D'Ormea, this
You now expressly come to tell me?

D'O. This
To tell! You apprehend me?

Cha. Perfectly.
And further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,
For the first time these many weeks and months,
Disposed to do my bidding?

D'O. From the heart!

Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure:
Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.
Acquaint the King!

D'O. [*Aside.*] If I 'scape Victor yet!
First, to prevent this stroke at me—if not,—
Then, to avenge it! [*To CHA.*] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*

Cha. God, I forbore! Which more offends—that man

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Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
 Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
 I needed e'en his intervention? No!
 No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
 Scarcely! Their step decides me.

Pol. How decides?

Cha. You would be free from D'Ormea's eye and hers?
 —Could fly the court with me and live content?
 So—this it is for which the knights assemble!
 The whispers and the closeting of late,
 The savageness and insolence of old,
 —For this!

Pol. What mean you?

Cha. How? you fail to catch
 Their clever plot? I missed it—but could you?
 These last two months of care to inculcate
 How dull I am,—with D'Ormea's present visit
 To prove that, being dull, I might be worse
 Were I a king—as wretched as now dull—
 You recognise in it no winding up
 Of a long plot?

Pol. Why should there be a plot?

Cha. The crown's secure now; I should shame the
 crown—

An old complaint; the point is, how to gain
 My place for one more fit in Victor's eyes,
 His mistress', the Sebastian's child.

Pol. In truth?

Cha. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:
 But they may descant on my dulness till
 They sting me into even praying them
 For leave to hide my head, resign my state,
 And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,
 They'd have me tender them myself my rights
 As one incapable:—some cause for that,
 Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 325

I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.

Pol. Pause-- I dare not think
So ill of Victor.

Cha. Think no ill of him !

Pol. —Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer
His purpose be divined thus easily.
And yet—you are the last of a great line ;
There's a great heritage at stake ; new days
Seemed to await this newest of the realms
Of Europe :—Charles, you must withstand this !

Cha. Ah

You dare not then renounce the splendid court
For one whom all the world despises ? Speak !

Pol. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.
Were this as you believe, and I once sure
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . could ? Oh, what happiness it were---
To live, my Charles, and die alone with you !

Cha. I grieve I asked you. To the Presence, then !
D'Ormea acquaints the King by this, no doubt,
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth
Teaching me in full council what I am.
—I have not breathed, I think, these many years !

Pol. Why—it may be !—if he desires to wed
That woman and legitimate her child—

Cha. You see as much ? Oh, let his will have way !
You'll not repent confiding in me, love ?
There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,
Than Rivoli. I'll seek him—or, suppose
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind ?
—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure !
I yet may see your Rhine-land—who can tell ?
Once away, ever then away ! I breathe.

Pol. And I too breathe !

Cha. Come, my Polyxena !

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KING VICTOR: PART II.

*Enter KING VICTOR, bearing the regalia on a cushion
from his apartment. He calls loudly.*

D'Ormea !—for patience fails me, treading thus
Among the trains that I have laid,—my knights,
Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,
My son,—and D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—
[*Laying down the crown.*]

This fireball to these mute, black, cold trains—then !
Outbreak enough !

[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all !
This—glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,
Brave meteor, like the Crown of Cyprus now—
Jerusalem, Spain, England—every change
The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize
My ancestry died wan with watching for,
To lose it !—by a slip—a fault—a trick
Learnt to advantage once, and not unlearned
When past the use,—“just this once more” (I thought)
“Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
And then away with trick !”—An oversight
I'd have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now ! There's peace
At length ; and I, to make the most of peace,
Ventured my project on our people here,
As needing not their help—which Europe knows,
And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
(Apart from plausibilities of war)
To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth
And laughed at her : my name was left, my sword
Left, all was left ! But she can take, she knows,
This crown, herself conceded . . .

That's to try,
Kind Europe ! My career's not closed as yet !
This boy was ever subject to my will—
Timid and tame—the fitter ! D'Ormea, too—
What if the sovereign's also rid of thee
His prime of parasites ?—Yet I delay !
D'Ormea ! [*As D'Ormea enters, the King seats himself.*
My son, the Prince—attends he ?

D'O. Sire,
He does attend. The crown prepared !—it seems
That you persist in your resolve.

Vic. Who's come ?
The chancellor and the chamberlain ? My knights
D'O. The whole Annunziata.—If, my liege,
Your fortunes had not tottered worse than now . . .

Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules ? mine—
My son's too ? Excellent ! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths ;
Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince shall sign ;
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument —
On which, I enter.—

D'O. Sire, this may be truth ;
You, sire, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces : try at least
If not a spring remains worth saving ! Take
My counsel as I've counselled many times !
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat ?
There's England, Holland, Venice—which ally
Select you ?

Vic. Aha ! Come, my D'Ormea,—"truth"
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies ?
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England.
—As who knows if not you ?

D'O. But why with me
Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith ?

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Vic. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis—('twas
At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk . . .)

D'O. . . . Therefore your soul's ally!—who brought
you through

Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—
Who've simply echoed you in these affairs—
On whom you cannot, therefore, visit these
Affairs' ill fortune—whom you'll trust to guide
You safe (yes, on my soul) in these affairs!

Vic. I was about to notice, had you not
Prevented me, that since that great town kept
With its chicane my D'Ormea's satchel stuffed,
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,
He missed a sight,—my naval armament
When I burnt Toulon. How the skiff exults
Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,
O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts—
And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot:—shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?
Apply this: you have been my minister
—Next me—above me, possibly;—sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
Who would desiderate the eminence?
You gave your soul to get it—you'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
My D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with me?
Whereas it cants you to another's crest—
I toss you to my son; ride out your riddle!

D'O. Ah, you so much despise me then?

Vic. You, D'Ormea?

Nowise: and I'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with mine
When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
(. . Or wait, did Pianeze? . . ah, just the same!).

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 329

Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
 The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly,
 Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,
 The door to make his exit on his speech)
 —I should repent of what I did : now, D'Ormea,
 (Be candid—you approached it when I bade you
 Prepare the schedules ! But you stopped in time)
 —You have not so assured me : how should I
 Despise you, then ?

Enter CHARLES.

Vic. [changing his tone.] Are you instructed ? Do
 My order, point by point ! About it, sir !

D'O. You so despise me ? *[Aside.]* One last stay
 remains—

The boy's discretion there. *[to CHARLES.]*

For your sake, Prince,
 I pleaded—wholly in your interest—
 To save you from this fate !

Cha. [Aside.] Must I be told
 The Prince was supplicated for—by him ?

Vic. [to D'O.] Apprise Del Borgo, Spava, and the rest,
 Our son attends them ; then return.

D'O. One word.

Cha. [Aside.] A moment's pause and they would drive
 me hence,
 I do believe !

D'O. [Aside.] Let but the boy be firm !

Vic. You disobey ?

Cha. [to D'O.] You do not disobey
 Me, D'Ormea ? Did you promise that or no ?

D'O. Sir, I am yours—what would you ? Yours
 am I !

Cha. When I have said what I shall say, 'tis like
 Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go !
 Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.

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And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt ! You might have spared me much,
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself—
That's over now. Go—ne'er to come again !

D'O. As son, the father—father as, the son !
My wits ! My wits ! [*Goes.*]

Vic. [*Seated.*] And you, what meant you, pray,
By speaking thus to D'Ormea ?

Cha. Let us not
Weary ourselves with D'Ormea, ! Those few words
Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.

Vic. One called to manage kingdoms, Charles, needs
heart

To bear up under worse annoyances
Than D'Ormea seems—to me, at least.

Cha. [*Aside.*] " Ah, good !
He keeps me to the point ! Then be it so.

[*Aloud.*] Last night, Sire, brought me certain papers—
these—

To be reported on,—your way of late.

Is it last night's result that you demand ?

Vic. For God's sake, what has night brought forth ?
Pronounce

The . . . what's your word?—result !

Cha. Sire, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneers, no doubt :—a few
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,
Lame as they are, from brains, like mine, believe !
As 'tis, sire, I am spared both toil and sneer.
There are the papers.

Vic. Well, sir ? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your result !

Cha. I never should have done great things of
course,
But . . . oh, my father, had you loved me more . . .

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 331

Vic. Loved you? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea played me false, I wonder?

[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—yourself

May overlook, perchance, your part in it.

Our monarchy is absolutest now

In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away :

I love, my mode, that subjects each and all

May have the power of loving, all and each,

Their mode : I doubt not, many have their sons

To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long—

I have that crown, this chair, and D'Ormea, Charles !

Cha. 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.

Vic. [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha !

I apprehend you : when all's said, you take

Your private station to be prized beyond

My own, for instance ?

Cha. —Do and ever did

So take it : 'tis the method you pursue

That grieves . . .

Vic. These words ! Let me express, my friend,

Your thought. You penetrate what I supposed

A secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes !

I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Cha. To me ?

Vic. Now—in that chamber.

Cha. You resign

The crown to me ?

Vic. And time enough, Charles, sure ?

Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years

A crown's a load. I covet quiet once

Before I die, and summoned you for that.

Cha. 'Tis I will speak : you ever hated me,

I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—

Now you insult yourself, and I remember

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What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What ! My life has passed
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—
Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
A fool, I thought, and I submitted ; now
You'd prove . . . what would you prove me ?

Vic.

This to me ?

I hardly know you !

Cha.

Know me ? Oh, indeed
You do not ! Wait till I complain next time
Of my simplicity !—for here's a sage—
Knows the world well—is not to be deceived—
And his experience, and his Macchiavels,
His D'Ormeas, teach him—what ?—that I, this while,
Have envied him his crown ! He has not smiled,
I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor slept,
For I was plotting with my Princess yonder !
Who knows what we might do, or might not do ?
Go, now—be politic—astound the world !—
That sentry in the antechamber . . . nay,
The varlet who disposed this precious trap

[Pointing to the crown.]

That was to take me—ask them if they think
Their own sons envy them their posts !—Know me !

Vic. But you know me, it seems ; so learn in brief
My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Cha. Tell me, that woman put it in your head—
You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
My father !

Vic. Now observe me, sir ! I jest
Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,
The Knights assemble to see me concede,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Cha.

Farewell !

'Twere vain to hope to change this—I can end it.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES 333

Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
 Into obscurity. I'll die for you,
 But not annoy you with my presence—Sire,
 Farewell ! Farewell !

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ha, sure he's changed again—
 Means not to fall into the cunning trap—
 Then, Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor !

Vic. [*suddenly placing the crown upon the head of*
 CHARLES.]

D'Ormea, your King !

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me ! Charles,
 Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
 Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real !
 My reasons after—reason upon reason
 After—but now, obey me ! Trust in me !
 By this, you save Sardinia, you save me !
 Why the boy swoons ! [*To D'O.*] Come this side !

D'O. [*as CHARLES turns from him to VICTOR.*]

You persist ?

Vic. Yes--I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith,
 He almost seems to hate you--how is that ?
 Be re-assured, my Charles ! Is't over now ?
 Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains
 To do ! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads
 The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
 Then I sign ; after that, come back to me.

D'O. Sire, for the last time, pause !

Vic. Five minutes longer

I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate--
 And I'll so turn those minutes to account
 That . . . Ay, you recollect me !

[*Aside.*] Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading
 That Act of Abdication !

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[As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to precede him.

Thanks, dear Charles!

[CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.

Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed
Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,
This earnest tone—your truth, now, for effect!
It answers every purpose: with that look,
That voice,—I hear him: “I began no treaty,”
(He speaks to Spain,) “nor ever dreamed of this
“You show me; this I from my soul regret;
“But if my father signed it, bid not me
“Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside.”
And, “truth,” says Spain, “’twere harsh to visit that
“Upon the Prince.” Then come the nobles trooping:
“I grieve at these exactions—I had cut
“This hand off ere impose them; but shall I
“Undo my father’s deed?”—And they confer:
“Doubtless he was no party, after all;
“Give the Prince time!”—

Ay, give us time—but time!

Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,
Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
We’ll have no child’s play, no desponding-fits,
No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor
To take his crown again. Guard against that!

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles!—

No—Charles’s counsellor!

Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

D'O. “King Charles!” What then may you be?

Vic.

Anything!

A country gentleman that’s cured of bustle,
And beats a quick retreat toward Chambery
To hunt and hawk, and leave you noisy folk
To drive your trade without him. I’m Count Remont—

Count Tende—any little place's Count !

D'O. Then, Victor, Captain against Catinat,
At Staffarde, where the French beat you ; and Duke
At Turin, where you beat the French ; King, late,
Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,
—Now, "any little place's Count"—

Vic.

Proceed !

D'O. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you
first ;

Breaker of vows to Man, who kept you since ;
Most profligate to me, who outraged God
And Man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
I was but privy to, by passing thus
To your imbecile son—who, well you know,
Must, (when the people here, and nations there,
Clamour for you, the main delinquent, slipt
From King to—Count of any little place)
—Surrender me, all left within his reach, —
I, sir, forgive you : for I see the end—
See you on your return (you will return)
To him you trust in for the moment . . .

Vic.

How ?

Trust in him ? (merely a prime-minister
This D'Ormea !) How trust in him ?

D'O.

In his fear —

His love,—but pray discover for yourself
What you are weakest, trusting in !

Vic.

Aha,

My D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
In your repertory ? You know old Victor —
Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I've heard
Talkers who little thought the King so close)
Felicitous, now, were't not, to provoke him
To clean forget, one minute afterward,
His solemn act—to call the nobles back
And pray them give again the very power

336 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

He has abjured !—for the dear sake of—what ?
 Vengeance on you ! No, D'Ormea : such am I,
 Count Tende or Count anything you please,
 —Only, the same that did the things you say,
 And, among other things you say not, used
 Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
 I used, and now, since you will have it so,
 Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
 You and your works—Why, what on earth beside
 Are you made for, you sort of ministers ?

D'O. —Not left, though, to my fate ! Your witless
 son

Has more wit than to load himself with lumber :
 He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Vic. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side !

D'O. Ay, be tossed to the people like a rag,
 And flung by them to Spain and Austria—so
 Abolishing the record of your part
 In all this perfidy !

Vic. Prevent, beside,

My own return !

D'O. That's half prevented now !
 'Twill go hard but you'll find a wondrous charm
 In exile, to discredit me. The Alps—
 Silk-mills to watch—vines asking vigilance—
 I founds open for the stag—your hawk's a-wing—
 Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
 Italy's Janus !

Vic. So, the lawyer's clerk
 Won't tell me that I shall repent !

D'O. You give me
 Full leave to ask if you repent ?

Vic. Whene'er,
 Sufficient time's elapsed for that, you judge !

[*Shouts inside, "KING CHARLES."*]

O'D. Do you repent ?

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 337

Vic. [after a slight pause.] . . . I've kept them waiting? Yes!

Come in—complete the Abdication, sir! [*They go out.*]

Enter POLYXENA.

Pol. A shout? The sycophants are free of Charles!
Oh, is not this like Italy? No fruit.
Of his or my distempered fancy, this—
But just an ordinary fact! Beside,
Here they've set forms for such proceedings—Victor
Imprisoned his own mother—he should know,
If any, how a son's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects—be it so!
Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
Might prove your lot—for strength was shut in you
None guessed but I—strength which, untrammelled once,
Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
—All which, they shout to lose!

So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save Charles
Regret?—the noble nature! He's not made
Like the Italians: 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES enters crowned.

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone:—the Crown-prince? Gone—
Where's Savoy? Gone:—Sardinia? Gone!—But Charles
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight
As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
Because I praised him, then how will he look?

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Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine !
Now I'll teach you my language—I'm not forced
To speak Italian now, Charles ?

[*She sees the crown.*] What is this ?

Answer me—who has done this ? Answer !

Cha.

He !

I am King now.

Pol. Oh worst, worst, worst of all !

Tell me—what, Victor ? He has made you King ?

What's he then ? What's to follow this ? You, King ?

Cha. Have I done wrong ? Yes—for you were not by !

Pol. Tell me from first to last.

Cha.

Hush—a new world

Brightens before me ; he is moved away

—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides

Into a shape supporting me like you,

And I, alone, tend upward, more and more

Tend upward : I am grown Sardinia's King.

Pol. Now stop : was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy
At ten years old ?

Cha.

He was.

Pol.

And the Duke spent

Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil

To be—what ?

Cha.

King.

Pol.

Then why unking himself ?

Cha. Those years are cause enough.

Pol.

The only cause ?

Cha. Some new perplexities.

Pol.

Which you can solve,

Although he cannot ?

Cha.

He assures me so.

Pol. And this he means shall last—how long ?

Cha.

How long ?

Think you I fear the perils I confront ?

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 339

He's praising me before the people's face —
My people !

Pol. Then he's changed—grown kind, the King ?
(Where can the trap be ?)

Cha. Heart and soul I pledge !
My father, could I guard the Crown you gained,
Transmit as I received it,—all good else
Would I surrender !

Pol. Ah, it opens then
Before you—all you dreaded formerly ?
You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles ?

Cha. So much to dare ? The better ;—much to dread ?
The better. I'll adventure tho' alone.
Triumph or die, there's Victor still to witness
Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone !

Pol. Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,
Or death.

Cha. But you are I ! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven
A moment since. I will deserve the crown !

Pol. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it were a glorious
thing
For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap !

Enter VICTOR.

'Tis he must show me.

Vic. So the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last ! Spare thanks—
I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me
Be seated ? And my light-haired, blue-eyed child
Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.

Pol. Most grateful shall we now be, talking least
Of gratitude—indeed of anything

340 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

That hinders what yourself must have to say
To Charles.

Cha. Pray speak, Sir !

Vic. 'Faith, not much to say—

Only what shows itself, once in the point
Of sight. You are now the King : you'll comprehend
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.
For what's our post ? Here's Savoy and here's Piedmont,
Here's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—
To o'er-sweep all these, what's one weapon worth ?
I often think of how they fought in Greece
(Or Rome, which was it ? You're the scholar, Charles !)
You made a front-thrust ? But if your shield, too,
Were not adroitly planted—some shrewd knave
Reached you behind ; and, him foiled, straight if thong
And handle of that shield were not cast loose,
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side ; 'scape these,
And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds
If the gate opened unless breath enough
Was left in you to make its lord a speech.
Oh, you will see !

Cha. No : straight on shall I go,
Truth helping ; win with it or die with it.

Vic. 'Faith, Charles, you're not made Europe's
fighting-man !

Its barrier-guarder, if you please. You hold,
Not take—consolidate, with envious French
This side, with Austrians that, these territories
I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold
Despite the couple ! But I've surely earned
Exemption from these weary politics,
—The privilege to prattle with my son
And daughter here, tho' Europe waits the while.

Pol. Nay, Sire,—at Chambery, away for ever,

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 341

As soon you'll be, 'tis a farewell we bid you !
Turn these few fleeting moments to account !
'Tis just as though it were a death.

Vic.

Indeed !

Pol. [*Aside.*] Is the trap there ?

Cha.

Ay, call this parting—death !

The sacredder your memory becomes.

If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back

My father ? No—that thought shall ever urge me.

Vic. I do not mean . . .

Pol. [*who watches VICTOR narrowly this while.*]

Your father does not mean

That you are ruling for your father's sake :

It is your people must concern you wholly

Instead of him. You meant this, Sir ? (*He drops*
My hand !)

Cha.

That People is now part of me.

Vic. About the People ! I took certain measures

Some short time since . . . Oh, I'm aware you know

But little of my measures—these affect

The nobles—we've resumed some grants, imposed

A tax or two ; prepare yourself, in short,

For clamours on that score : mark me : you yield

No jot of what's entrusted you !

Pol.

No jot

You yield !

Cha.

My father, when I took the oath,
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,

I heard it, understood it, promised God

What you require. Till from this eminence

He moves me, here I keep, nor shall concede

The meanest of my rights.

Vic. [*Aside.*]

The boy's a fool !

—Or rather, I'm a fool : for, what's wrong here ?

To-day the sweets of reigning—let to-morrow

Be ready with its bitters.

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Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

Cha. Then why delay it for an instant, Sire?
That Spanish claim, perchance? And, now you speak,
—This morning, my opinion was mature—
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing
To one, I ne'er am like to fear, in future!
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

Vic. (Betimes, indeed.) Not now, Charles. You
require

A host of papers on it—

D'O. [*coming forward.*] Here they are.
[*To CHA.*] I was the minister and much beside—
Of the late monarch: to say little, him
I served: on you I have, to say e'en less,
No claim. This case contains those papers: with them
I tender you my office.

Vic. [*hastily.*] Keep him, Charles!
There's reason for it—many reasons: you
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but
He's mixed up in this matter—he'll desire
To quit you, for occasions known to me:
Do not accept those reasons—have him stay!

Pol. [*Aside.*] His minister thrust on us!

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Sir, believe,

In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commending: whatsoe'er might be
My feelings toward you as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field
Of action. Though I shall, myself, (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help
Is necessary. Think the past forgotten,
And serve me now!

D'O. I did not offer you

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 343

My services—would I could serve you, Sire !
As for the Spanish matter . . .

Vic. . . . But despatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,
Before the living ! I help to house me safe
Ere you and D'Ormea set the world a-gape !
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs ?
I get as far from you as possible.

There's what I reckon my expenditure.

Cha. [*reading*]. A miserable fifty thousand crowns !

Vic. Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen !
Besides the exchequer happens . . . but find out
All that, yourself !

Cha. [*still reading*]. "Count Tende"—what means
this ?

Vic. Me : you were but an infant when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon France.
Had only my allies kept true to me !
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take
Just as . . .

D'O. . . . The Marchioness Sebastian takes
The name of Spigno.

Cha. . . . How, sir ?

Vic. [*to D'ORMEA*]. Fool ! All that
Was for my own detailing. [*To CHARLES*]. That anon !

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA*]. Explain what you have said, sir !
D'O. . . . I supposed

The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he's Count.

Pol. [*Aside*]. . . With us

The minister—with him the mistress !

Cha. [*to VICTOR*]. . . No—

Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall !

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Vic. And where's the crime . . .

Pol. (to CHARLES.) True, sir, this is a matter past recall,

And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this—now
Why note it? The King saved his House from shame:
What the Count does, is no concern of yours.

Cha. [after a pause.] The Spanish business, D'Ormea!

Vic. Why, my son,

I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,
Spoils everything: though I was over-reached,
A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King!

D'O. [without regarding VICTOR, and leisurely.] Thus
stands the case with Spain:

When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

Vic. I tell you, that stands over! Let that rest!
There is the policy!

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Thus much I know,
And more—too much: the remedy?

D'O. Of course!

No glimpse of one—

Vic. No remedy at all!

It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.

D'O. [to CHARLES.] But if . . .

Vic. [still more hastily.] In fine, I shall take care of that—
And with another project that I have . . .

D'O. [turning on him.] Oh, since Count Tende means
to take again

King Victor's crown!—

Pol. [throwing herself at VICTOR'S feet.] E'en now
retake it, Sire!

Oh, speak! We are your subjects both, once more!

Say it—a word effects it! You meant not,

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 345

Nor do mean now, to take it—but you must !
'Tis in you—in your nature—and the shame's
Not half the shame 'twould grow to afterward !

Cha. Polyxena !

Pol. A word recalls the Knights—
Say it !—What's promising and what's the past ?
Say you are still King Victor !

D'O. Better say
The Count repents in brief ! [*VICTOR rises.*]

Cha. With such a crime
I have not charged you, Sire !

Pol. Charles turns from me !

SECOND YEAR 1731.—KING CHARLES.

PART I.

Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'ORMEA—A pause.

Pol. And now, sir, what have you to say ?

D'O. Count Tende . . .

Pol. Affirm not I betrayed you ; you resolve
On uttering this strange intelligence
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach
The capital, because you know King Charles
Tarries a day or two at Evian baths
Behind me :—but take warning,—here and thus
[*Seating herself in the royal seat.*]

I listen, if I listen—not your friend.
Explicitly the statement, if you still
Persist to urge it on me, must proceed :
I am not made for aught else.

D'O. Good ! Count Tende . . .

Pol. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles,
Who even more mistrusts you.

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D'O. Does he so?

Pol. Why should he not?

D'O. Ay, why not? *Motivès*, seek
You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve
God at the devil's bidding—will that do?
I'm proud: our People have been pacified
(Really I know not how)—

Pol. By truthfulness.

D'O. Exactly; that shows I had nought to do
With pacifying them: our foreign perils
Also exceed my means to stay: but here
'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued. Count Tende
Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,
Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,
His measures back? I pray you, act upon
My counsel, or they will be.

Pol. When?

D'O. Let's think.

Home-matters settled—Victor's coming now;
Let foreign matters settle—Victor's here:
Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.

Pol. [*reading the papers he presents.*] If this should
prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor?
You seek annoyances to give him pretext
For what you say you fear!

D'O. Oh, possibly!
I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please.

Pol. Half of your tale is true; most like, the Count
Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
To aid in such emergencies.

D'O. Keep safe
Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no proof
I thus have counselled: when the Count returns,
And the King abdicates, 'twill stead me little

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To have thus counselled.

Pol.

The King abdicate

D'O. He's good, we knew long since—wise, we discover—

Firm, let us hope :—but I'd have gone to work
With him away. Well !

[*CHARLES without.*] In the Council Chamber ?

D'O. All's lost !

Pol.

Oh, surely not King Charles ! He's

changed—

That's not this year's care-burthened voice and step :

'Tis last year's step—the Prince's voice !

D'O.

I know !

Enter CHARLES—D'ORMEA retiring a little.

Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena ! Wish it me

The old way !

[*She embraces him.*

There was too much cause for that !

But I have found myself again ! What's news

At Turin ? Oh, if you but felt the load

I'm free of—free ! I said this year would end

Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God !

Pol. How, Charles ?

Cha.

You do not guess ? The day I found

Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,

And how my father was involved in it,—

Of course, I vowed to rest or smile no more

Until I freed his name from obloquy.

We did the people right—'twas much to gain

That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—

But that took place here, was no crying shame :

All must be done abroad,—if I abroad

Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed

The scandal, took down Victor's name at last

From a bad eminence, I then might breathe

And rest ! No moment was to lose. Behold

348 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
Agree to—

D'O. [*Aside.*] I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.

Cha. Not a soul
Is compromised : the blotted Past's a blank :
Even D'Ormea will escape unquestioned. See !
It reached me from Vienna ; I remained
At Evian to despatch the Count his news ;
'Tis gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I : do I deserve to feel
Your warm white arms around me ?

D'O. [*coming forward.*] He knows that ?

Cha. What, in Heaven's name, means this ?

D'O. He knows that matters
Are settled at Vienna ? Not too late !
Plainly, unless you post this very hour
Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery,
And take precautions I'll acquaint you with,
Your father will return here.

Cha. Is he crazed,
This D'Ormea ? Here ? For what ? As well return
To take his crown !

D'O. He will return for that.

Cha. [*to POLYXENA.*] You have not listened to this
man ?

Pol. He spoke
About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*]

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] What
Apprised you of the Count's intentions ?

D'O. Me ?
His heart, Sire ; you may not be used to read
Such evidence, however ; therefore read

[*Pointing to POLYXENA's papers.*]

My evidence.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 349

Cha. [to POLYXENA.] Oh, worthy this of you !
 And of your speech I never have forgotten,
 Tho' I professed forgetfulness ; which haunts me
 As if I did not know how false it was ;
 Which made me toil unconsciously thus long
 That there might be no least occasion left
 For aught of its prediction coming true !
 And now, when there is left no least occasion
 To instigate my father to such crime ;
 When I might venture to forget (I hoped)
 That speech and recognise Polyxena—
 Oh, worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
 That plague now ! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders
 Still in your hand ! Silent ?

Pot. As the wronged are.

Cha. And D'Ormea, pray, since when have you presumed
 To spy upon my father ? (I conceive
 What that wise paper shows, and easily.)
 Since when ?

D'O. The when, and where, and how, belong
 To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.
 You oftentimes serve yourself—I'd serve you here :
 Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,
 Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
 Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Cha. You hate my father ?

D'O. Oh, just as you will !
 [Looking at POLYXENA.]

A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now !
 What matters ?—If you'll ponder just one thing :
 Has he that Treaty ?—He is setting forward
 Already. Are your guards here ?

Cha. Well for you
 They are not ! [To POL.] Him I knew of old, but you—
 To hear that pickthank, further his designs ! [To D'O.]

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Guards?—were they here, I'd bid them, for your trouble,
Arrest you.

D'O. Guards you shall not want. I lived
The servant of your choice, not of your need.

You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.

Again I tender you my charge—its duty
Would bid me press you read those documents.*

Here, Sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*]

Cha. [*taking it.*] The papers also! Do you think
I dare not read them?

Pol. Read them, sir?

Cha. They prove,

My father, still a month within the year

Since he so solemnly consigned it me,

Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that,

Or my best dungeon . . .

D'O. Even say, Chambery!
'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.

Cha. You prove

Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!

Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil

Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,

You'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!

Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved

False charges—my heart's love of other times!

Pol. Ah, Charles!

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Precede me, sir!

D'O. And I'm at length

A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,

Of miracles. My conscious innocence!

[*As they go out, enter—by the middle door—at which
he pauses—VICTOR.*]

Vic. Sure I heard voices? No! Well, I do best

To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.

The old room! Nothing changed!—So near my seat,

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 351

D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the KING'S chair.*]

I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, D'Ormea won't be slow
To hearten me, the supple knave! That burst
Of spite so eased him! He'll inform me . . .

What?

Why come I hither? All's in rough—let all
Remain rough; there's full time to draw back—nay,
There's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,
If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose
And save, as I have saved so many times,
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
Now is the time,—or now, or never. 'Faith,
This kind of step is pitiful—not due
To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because
He's from his Capital! Oh, Victor! Victor!
But thus it is: the age of crafty men
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off
Dissimulation; we may intersperse
Extenuating passages of strength,
Ardour, vivacity, and wit—may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace,—
But one's old age, when graces drop away
And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
Ah, loathsome!

Not so—or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the Army's mine—I've witnessed
Each private fight beneath me; all the Court's
Mine too; and, best of all, my D'Ormea's still
His D'Ormea; no! There's some grace clinging yet.
Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
I'd take the crown.

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No! Just this step to rise
 Exhausts me! Here am I arrived: the rest
 Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
 And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque
 —Of the King, crownless, grey hairs and hot blood,—
 The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,
 They say,—the eager woman with her taunts,—
 And the sad earnest wife who motions me
 Away—ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet
 I can return and sleep at Chambery
 A dream out. Rather shake it off at Turin,
 King Victor! Is't to Turin—yes, or no?
 'Tis this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,
 Lighted like life, but silent as the grave,
 That disconcerts me! There must be the change—
 No silence last year: some one flung doors wide
 (Those two great doors which scrutinise me now)
 And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,
 Men watching if my lip fell or brow changed;
 Men saw me safe forth—put me on my road:
 That makes the misery of this return!
 Oh, had a battle done it! Had I dropped
 —Haling some battle, three entire days old,
 Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped
 In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
 Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,
 When the spent monster goes upon its knees
 To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,
 Sole to have stood up against France—beat down
 By inches, brayed to pieces finally
 By some vast unimaginable charge,
 A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
 Over me, and all's lost, for ever lost,
 There's no more Victor when the world wakes up!
 Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
 Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days

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After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Thro' the stiff crust of frozen blood)—there creeps
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,
Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
Begging a pittance that may help him find
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow
The coin you fling into his cap: and last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst
Of the market-place, where takes the old king breath
Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no--or no?

Re-enter CHARLES with papers.

Cha. Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood
Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement! A few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
By means that suit their natures!

[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake
My faith in Victor!

[*Turning, he discovers VICTOR.*

Vic. [*after a pause.*] Not at Evian, Charles?
What's this? Why do you run to close the doors?
No welcome for your father?

Cha. [*Aside.*] Not his voice!
What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort! That's gone for ever.

Vic. Must
I ask once more . . .

Cha. No—I concede it, sir!
You are returned for . . . true, your health declines—
True, Chambery's a bleak unkindly spot:
You'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—

354 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

Veneria—or Moncagliar—ay, that's close,
And I concede it.

Vic. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter
Dated from Evian baths . . .

Cha. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied
The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence
Would only disconcert me—

Vic. Charles?

Cha. —Me—set
For ever in a foreign course to yours,
And . . .

Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth !
Though I sink under it ! What brings you here ?

Vic. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfulest calamity !

Cha. —You mean,
Did you require your crown again ! Oh yes,
I should speak otherwise ! But turn not that
To jesting ! Sir, the truth ! Your health declines ?
Is aught deficient in your equipage ?
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs
At petty discontents ; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak !

Vic. [*Aside.*] Here is the grateful, much-professing son
Who was to worship me, and for whose sake
I think to waive my plans of public good !
[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself—
What would be warrant for this bitterness ?

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 355

I gave it—grant, I would resume it—well?

Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown :
And as you then intended . . .

Vic. Fool ! What way
Could I intend or not intend ? As man,
With a man's life, when I say " I intend,"
I can intend up to a certain point,
No further. I intended to preserve
The Crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole :
And if events arise demonstrating
The way I took to keep it, rather's like
To lose it . . .

Cha. Keep within your sphere and mine !
It is God's province we usurp on, else.
Here, blindfold thro' the maze of things we walk
By a slight thread of false, true, right and wrong ;
All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom : there's my truth.

Vic. Truth, boy, is here—within my breast ; and in
Your recognition of it, truth is, too :
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing
With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,
—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,
Truth for the world ! But you are right : these themes
Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme :
I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,
What I must bring about : I interpose
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight —
To hold what he is nearly letting go—
Confirm his title—add a grace, perhaps—
There's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
And taken back, some years since—till I give
That island with the rest, my work's half done.
For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

356 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

Cha. Our sakes are one—and that, you could not say,
Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith ;—a year has wrought an age's change :
This people's not the people now, you once
Could benefit ; nor is my policy
Your policy.

Vic. [*with an outburst.*] I know it ! You undo
All I have done—my life of toil and care !
I left you this the absolute rule
In Europe—do you think I will sit still
And see you throw all power off to the people—
See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,
Join in the mad and democratic whirl,
Whereto I see all Europe haste full-tide ?
England casts off her kings—France mimics England—
This realm I hoped was safe ! Yet here I talk,
When I can save it, not by force alone,
But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,
Fasten upon my disobedient . . .

[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely
I could say this—if minded so—my son ?

Cha. You could not ! Bitterer curses than your curse
I have I long since denounced upon myself
If I misused my power. In fear of these
I entered on those measures—will abide
By them : so, I should say, Count Tende . . .

Vic. No !
But no ! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
And then confessed them futile, but said plainly
That he forgot his promise, found his strength
Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had built
When he was fortunate and young—

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 357

Cha.

My father !

Vic. Stay yet—and if he said he could not die
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
Your brain up, whole, sound, and impregnable,
Creating kingliness—the Sceptre, too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat
Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as you may choose !
—If I must totter up and down the streets
My sires built, where myself have introduced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
The civil and the military arts—
Stay, Charles—I see you letting me pretend
To live my former self once more—King Victor,
The venturous yet politic—they style me
Again, the Father of the Prince—friends wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
That else would break upon the dotage !—You—
Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is't not in your breast my brow is hid ?
Is not your hand extended ? Say you not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.

Pol. [*advancing and withdrawing CHARLES—to VICTOR.*]

In this conjuncture, even, he would say—
(Tho' with a moistened eye and quivering lip)
The suppliant is my father—I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him fling
His well-earned fame away : there must not follow
Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
So absolute : no enemy shall learn,

358 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
And, when that child somehow stood danger out,
Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles
—Body, that's much,—and soul, that's more—and realm,
That's most of all ! No enemy shall say . . .

D'O. Do you repent, sir ?

Vic. [*resuming himself.*] D'Ormea ? This is well !
Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done !
Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear
The little your importunate father thrusts
Himself on you to say ! Ay, they'll correct
The amiable blind facility
You showed in answering his peevish suit :
What can he need to sue for ? Bravely, D'Ormea,
Have you fulfilled your office : but for you,
The old Count might have drawn some few more livres
To swell his income ! Had you, Lady, missed
The moment, a permission had been granted
To build afresh my ruinous old pile—
But you remembered properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits
I should have looked for !

Cha. Thanks, sir : degrade me,
So you remain yourself. Adieu !

Vic. I'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such potent mediators !
Had I first moved them both to intercede,
I might have had a chamber in Moncaglièr.
—Who knows ?

Cha. Adieu !

Vic. You bid me this adieu
With the old spirit ?

Cha. Adieu !

Vic. Charles—Charles—

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 359

Cha.

Adieu !

[VICTOR goes.]

Cha. You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear !
'Twas for another purpose the Count came.
The Count desires Moncaglièr. Give the order !
D'O. [*leisurely.*] Your minister has lost your confidence,
Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would . . .

Cha. [*flinging his badge back.*] Be still our minister !
And give a loose to your insulting joy -
It irks me more thus stilled than expressed.
Loose it !

D'O. There's none to loose, alas !— I see
I never am to die a martyr !

Pol. Charles !

Cha. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise !

KING CHARLES : PART II.

Night.—D'ORMEA *seated, folding papers he has been examining.*

This at the last effects it : now, King Charles
Or else King Victor—that's a balance : now
For D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A point to solve,
My masters—moralists—what'er's your style !
When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,
Impart to me among the rest ! No matter.
Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
To us the wicked—lesson them this once !
For safe among the wicked are you set,
Old D'Ormea. We lament life's brevity,
Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,

360 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."
D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years ;
A tree so long was stunted ; afterward,
What if it grew, continued growing, till
No fellow of the forest equalled it ?
'Twas a shrub then—a shrub it still must be :
While forward saplings, at the outset checked,
In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
Amid the forest's green fraternity.
Thus I shoot up—to surely get lopped down,
And bound up for the burning. Now for it !

Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with Attendants.

D'O. [*rites.*] Sire, in the due discharge of this my office—

This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .

Cha. Well, sir?

D'O. —That I, perchance,
May utter, also, what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.

Cha. What would you utter?

D'O. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event : for you I grieve—
E'en grieve for . . .

Cha. Tush, another time for talk !
My kingdom is in imminent danger?

D'O. Let
The Count communicate with France—its King,
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,
Though for no other war.

Cha. First for the levies ;
What forces can I muster presently ?

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 361

[D'ORMEA delivers papers which CHARLES inspects.

Cha. Good—very good. Montorio . . how is this?
—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers?

D'O. Since his land has been relieved
From double impost, this he manages:
But under the late monarch . .

Cha. Peace. I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'O. Count Spava means to head his troops himself.
Something's to fight for now; "whereas," says he,
"Under the Sovereign's father" . . .

Cha. It would seem
That all my people love me.

D'O. Yes.

[To POLYXENA while CHARLES continues to inspect the papers.

A temper
Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;
He terrifies men and they fall not off;
Good to restrain; best, if restraint were all:
But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such sway. Our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel, and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,
In time of peace, the King who brought them peace:
In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.
They love you, Sir!

Cha. [to Attendants.] Bring the Regalia forth.
Quit the room. And now, Marquis, answer me—
Why should the King of France invade my realm?

D'O. Why? Did I not acquaint your Majesty
An hour ago?

Cha. I choose to hear again

362 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

What then I heard.

D'O. Because, Sire, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have the crown
At any risk ; and, as I judge, calls in
These foreigners to aid him.

Cha. And your reason
For saying this ?

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ay, just his father's way !
[*To CH.*] The Count wrote yesterday to your Forces'
Chief,

Rhebinder,—made demand of help—

Cha. To try
Rhebinder- he's of alien blood : aught else ?

D'O. Receiving a refusal, --some hours after,
The Count called on Del Borgia to deliver
The Act of Abdication : he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—

Cha. What ensued ?

D'O. At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,
He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to the Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—
Admit him.

Cha. For a purpose, I divine,
These three were faithful, then ?

D'O. They told me :
And I—

Cha. Most faithful—

D'O. Tell it you—with this,
Moreover, of my own : if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will be
Upon his road to France for succour.

Cha. Good !
You do your duty, now, to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant ?—have, that is, your project
For saving both of us disgrace, past doubt ?

D'O. I have my counsel,—and the only one.
A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a pang :
But now the harsher course must be pursued.
These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe : this is a list
Of those suspected merely—men to watch ;
This—of the few of the Count's very household.
You must, however reluctantly, arrest ;
While here's a method of remonstrance (sure
Not stronger than the case demands) to take
With the Count's self.

Cha. Deliver those three papers.

Pol. [*while CHARLES inspects them—to D'ORMEA.*]
Your measures are not over-harsh, sir : France
Will hardly be deterred from coming hither
By these.

D'O. What good of my proposing measures
Without a chance of their success ? Even these,
I hear what he'll say at my presenting.

Cha. [*who has signed them.*] There !
About the warrants ! You've my signature.
What turns you pale ? I do my duty by you
In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'O. [*reading them separately.*] Arrest the people I
suspected merely ?

Cha. Did you suspect them ?

D'O. Doubtless : but—but—Sire,
This Forquieri's governor of Turin ;
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital.—Rabella, too ?
Why, Sire—

Cha. Oh, leave the ear to me.

D'O. [*still reading.*] You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list ?
Sire—

364 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

Cha. Why, you never bade arrest those men,
So close related to my father too,
On trifling grounds?

D'O. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,
Is hatching treason—but —

[*Still more troubled.*] Sire, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife! What's here?
Arrest the wife herself?

Cha. You seem to think it
A venial crime to plot against me. Well?

D'O. [*who has read the last paper.*] Wherefore am I
thus ruined? Why not take
My life at once? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it,
You, madam! I have served you, am prepared
For all disgraces—only, let disgrace
Be plain, be proper—proper for the world
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!
Take back your warrant—I will none of it.

Cha. Here is a man to talk of sickleness!
He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;
I bid him—

D'O. Not you! Were he trebly false,
You do not bid me—

Cha. Is't not written there?
I thought so: give—I'll set it right.

D'O. Is it there?
Oh, yes—and plain—arrest him—now—drag here
Your father! And were all six times as plain,
Do you suppose I'd trust it?

Cha. Just one word!
You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
Or else your life is forfeit.

D'O. Ay, to Turin
I bring him? And to-morrow?

Cha. Here and now !
 The whole thing is a lie—a hateful lie—
 As I believed and as my father said.
 I knew it from the first, but was compelled
 To circumvent you ; and the crafty D'Ormea,
 That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
 The miserable sower of such discord
 'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last !
 Oh, I see ! you arrive—this plan of yours,
 Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
 A sick, old, peevish man—wings hasty speech
 And ill-considered threats from him ; that's noted ;
 Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
 In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
 The day-by-day report of your paid creatures—
 And back you come—all was not ripe, you find,
 And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet—
 But you were in late time ! Only, 'twere best
 I never saw my father—these old men
 Are potent in excuses—and, meantime,
 D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without.

Pol. Charles—

Cha. Ah, no question ! You're for D'Ormea too !
 You'd have me eat and drink, and sleep, live, die
 With this lie coil'd about me, choking me !
 No, no—he's caught ! [*to D'ORMEA.*] You venture life,
 you say,
 Upon my father's perfidy ; and I
 Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
 The chains of testimony you thus wind
 About me ; though I do—do from my soul
 Discredit them : still I must authorise
 These measures—and I will. Perugia !

[*Many Officers enter.*] Count—

You and Solar, with all the force you have,
 Are at the Marquis' orders : what he bids,

366 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

Implicitly perform ! You are to bring
A traitor here ; the man that's likest one
At present, fronts me ; you are at his beck
For a full hour ; he undertakes to show you
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,
He dies this night ! The clemency you've blamed
So oft, shall he revoked—rights exercised
That I've abjured.

[To D'ORMEA.] Now, Sir, about the work !
To save your king and country ! Take the warrant !

D'O. [*boldly to PERUGIA.*] You hear the Sovereign's
mandate, Count Perugia ?

Obeys me ! As your diligence, expect
Reward ! All follow to Montcagliar !

Cha. [*in great anguish.*] D'Ormea ! [D'ORMEA goes.
He goes, lit up with that appalling smile !

[To POLYXENA after a pause.

At least you understand all this ?

Pol. These means

Of our defence—these measures of precaution ?

Cha. It must be the best way. I should have else
Withered beneath his scorn.

Pol. What would you say ?

Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the crown,
Polyxena ?

Pol. You then believe the story
In spite of all—That Victor's coming ?

Cha. Believe it ?

I know that he is coming—feel the strength
That has upheld me leave me at his coming !
'Twas mine, and now he takes his own again.
Some kinds of strength are well enough to have ;
But who's to have that strength ? Let my crown go !
I meant to keep it—but I cannot—cannot !
O nly, he shall not taunt me—he, the first—

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 367

See if he would not be the first to taunt me
 With having left his kingdom at a word—
 With letting it be conquered without stroke—
 With . . . no—no—'tis no worse than when he left it,
 I've just to bid him take it, and, that over,
 We'll fly away—fly—for I loathe this Turin,
 This Rivoli, all titles loathe, and state.
 We'd best go to your country—unless God
 Send I die now !

Pol. Charles, hear me !

Cha. — And again
 Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take me
 Out of this woe ! Yes, do speak—and keep speaking !
 I would not let you speak just now, for fear
 You'd counsel me against him : but talk, now,
 As we two used to talk in blessed times :
 Bid me endure all his caprices ; take me
 From this mad post above him !

Pol. I believe
 We are undone, but from a different cause.
 All your resources, down to the least guard,
 Are now at D'Ormea's beck. What if, this while,
 He acts in concert with your father ? We
 Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
 Where find a better place for them ?

Cha. [*acing the room.*] And why
 Does Victor come ? To undo all that's done !
 Restore the past—prevent the future ! Seat
 His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
 . . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,
 To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
 To hold up with your hands ? Whom ? One that's
 false—

False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false !
 The best is, that I knew it in my heart
 From the beginning, and expected this,

And hated you, Polyxena, because
 You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,
 Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while
 He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,
 I saw—

Fol. But if your measures take effect,
 And D'Ormea's true to you?

Cha. Then worst of all !
 I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him !
 Well may the woman taunt him with his child—
 I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
 Seated upon his seat, give D'Ormea leave
 To outrage him ! We talk—perchance they tear
 My father from his bed—the old hands feel
 For one who is not, but who should be there—
 And he finds D'Ormea ! D'Ormea, too, finds him !
 —The crowded chamber when the-lights go out—
 Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—
 The accursed promptings of the minute ! My guards !
 To horse—and after, with me—and prevent !

Pol. [*seizing his hand.*] King Charles ! Pause here
 upon this strip of time
 Allotted you out of eternity !

Crowns are from God—in his name you hold yours.
 Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life
 Should be abjured along with rule ; but now,
 Keep both ! Your duty is to live and rule—
 You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
 In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—
 Ay, you would have men's praise—this Rivoli
 Would be illumined : while, as 'tis, no doubt,
 Something of stain will ever rest on you ;
 No one will rightly know why you refused
 To abdicate ; they'll talk of deeds you could
 Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect
 Future achievements will blot out the past,

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 369

Envelop it in haze—nor shall we two
 Be happy any more ; 'twill be, I feel,
 Only in moments that the duty's seen
 As palpably as now—the months, the years
 Of painful indistinctness are to come,
 While daily must we tread these palace rooms
 Pregnant with memories of the past : your eye
 May turn to mine and find no comfort there,
 Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,
 Of other courses, with far other issues,
 We might have taken this great night—such bear,
 As I will bear ! What matters happiness ?
 Duty ! There's man's one moment—this is yours !
*[Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in
 his hand, she places him on his seat : a long pause
 and silence.*

Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR.

Vic. At last I speak ; but once—that once, to you !
 'Tis you I ask, not these your varletry,
 Who's King of us ?

Cha. *[from his seat.]* Count Tende . . .

Vic. What your spies

Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—
 Here to your face, amid your guards ! I choose
 To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—
 For still its potency surrounds the weak
 White locks their felon hands have discomposed.
 Or, I'll not ask who's King, but simply, who
 Withholds the crown I claim ? Deliver it !
 I have no friend in the wide world : nor France
 Nor England cares for me : you see the sum
 Of what I can avail. Deliver it !

Cha. Take it, my father !

And now say in turn,
 Was it done well, my father—sure not well,

370 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

To try me thus ! I might have seen much cause
 For keeping it—too easily seen cause !
 But, from that moment, e'en more woefully
 My life had pined away, than pine it will.
 Already you have much to answer for.
 My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes
 Were happy once ! No doubt, my people think
 That I'm their King still . . . but I cannot strive !
 Take it !

*Vic. [one hand on the crown CHARLES offers, the other
 on his neck.]* So few years give it quietly,
 My son ! It will drop from me. See you not ?
 A crown's unlike a sword to give away—
 That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give !
 But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads
 Young as this head—yet mine is weak enough,
 E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases
 To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece !
 All is alike gone by with me—who beat
 Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines !
 To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis' rival,
 And now . . .

Cha. [putting the crown on him, to the rest.] The
 King speaks, yet none kneels, I think !

Vic. I am then King ! As I became a King
 Despite the nations—kept myself a King—
 So I die King, with Kingship dying too
 Around me ! I have lasted Europe's time !
 What wants my story of completion ? Where
 Must needs the damning break show ! Who mistrusts
 My children here—tell they of any break
 'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall ?
 And who were by me when I died but they ?
 Who ?—D'Ormea there !

Cha.

What means he ?

Vic.

Ever there !

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES. 371

Charles—how to save your story? Mine must go!
 Say—say that you refused the crown to me—
 Charles, yours shall be my story! You immured
 Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
 I spend without a sight of you, then die—
 That will serve every purpose—tell that tale
 The world!

Cha. Mistrust me? Help!

Vic. Past help, past reach!
 'Tis in the heart—you cannot reach the heart.
 This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,
 Would have denied and so disgraced me.

Pol. Charles
 Has never ceased to be your subject, Sir!
 He reigned at first through setting up yourself
 As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,
 'Twas from a too intense appreciation
 Of your own character: he acted you—
 Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,
 Or look for any other than this end.
 I hold him worlds the worse on that account;
 But so it was.

Cha. [to POLYX.] I love you, now, indeed!
 [To VICTOR.] You never knew me!

Vic. Hardly till this moment,
 When I seem learning many other things,
 Because the time for using them is past.
 If 'twere to do again! That's idly wished.
 Truthfulness might prove policy as good
 As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes—
 I've made it fitter now to be a Queen's
 Than formerly—I've ploughed the deep lines there
 Which keep too well a crown from slipping off!
 No matter. Guile has made me King again.

Louis—'twas in King Victor's time—long since,
 When Louis reign'd—and, also, Victor reign'd—

372 KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

How the world talks already of us two !
God of eclipse and each discolour'd star,
Why do I linger then ?

Ha ! Where lurks he ?

D'Ormea ! Come nearer to your King ! Now stand !

[Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA approaches.]

But you lied, D'Ormea ! I do not repent.

[Dies.]

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